United Nations E/CN.3/2019/20*

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 December 2018

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Fiftieth session
5–8 March 2019
Item 3 (q) of the provisional agenda**
Items for discussion and decision: drugs and drug use statistics

Report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on drugs and drug use statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on drugs and drug use statistics. The report contains a review of recent activities on drugs statistics at the international level, following the discussions on this topic held at the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission and at the sixtieth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

The report contains a review of the activities and accomplishments since the previous report and a description of the challenges that exist and activities to be undertaken. The Commission is invited to take note of recent achievements and to comment on future activities with a view to strengthening the role of official statistics in improving the availability and quality of drugs statistics at the national, regional and global levels.

* Reissued for technical reasons on 11 January 2019.
** E/CN.3/2019/1.

18-21824* (E) 140118

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I. Introduction and background

1. At its forty-eighth session, the Statistical Commission discussed the topic of drugs statistics on the basis of a report presented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) (E/CN.3/2017/12). In its decision 48/110 (see E/2017/24, chap.I.C), the Statistical Commission recognized that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs was the United Nations policymaking body with the primary responsibility for drug control matters, and therefore having reviewed and recognized the statistical merits of the road map set out in the report, commended it for the consideration of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to ensure harmonization with the policy directions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and in this regard encouraged collaboration between the Statistical Commission and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

2. In its resolution 60/1 of March 2017, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs confirmed the importance of strengthening national data reporting mechanisms, identifying gaps in current drugs statistics and exploring possibilities to support countries in strengthening existing data collection and analysis tools at the national level. In addition, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs invited UNODC, in close cooperation with Member States, to reflect on possibilities to strengthen and streamline its existing data collection and analysis tools, including improving the quality and effectiveness of the UNODC-managed annual report questionnaire, by which data on drugs is collected worldwide each year.

3. In addition, in its resolution 72/198 on international cooperation to address and counter the world drug problem, the General Assembly reiterated its requests to UNODC to continue to support Member States, upon request, in strengthening their capacity to develop their reporting mechanisms, to reflect on possibilities for strengthening and streamlining its existing data-collection and analysis tools, including improving and strengthening the quality, response rate and effectiveness of the annual report questionnaire, and to report to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on possible ways to enhance these, for consideration by the Commission at its sixty-second session. The Assembly also welcomed Statistical Commission decision 48/110 of 10 March 2017 on statistics on drugs and drug use and encouraged collaboration between the Statistical Commission and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, within their mandates.

4. In order to respond to such requests, UNODC undertook wide consultation among national authorities and convened an expert consultation meeting from 29 to 31 January 2018. The meeting was attended by representatives from 52 countries and 5 regional and international bodies. Representatives from a variety of national institutions, including from national statistical offices, attended the meeting.

5. The objectives of the meeting were:

(a) To identify and review the statistical methodologies needed to produce better data on drugs;

(b) To review international tools and capacity development activities to improve the capacity of countries to produce, disseminate and share high-quality data on drugs;

(c) To discuss the quality and relevance of data currently collected through the annual report questionnaire and possible ways for improvement.

6. Experts provided guidance on a number of actions to take to improve drugs statistics at the national and international levels. They considered ways to review the global data collection system based on the annual report questionnaire to meet the

information needs indicated in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem and the outcome document of the 2016 special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem (resolution S-30/1).

II. Outcomes of consultations with national experts

7. Experts identified a number of activities to improve statistical information on drugs, both at the national and international levels. The following key elements emerged from the expert discussions:

A. Supporting statistical infrastructure and drug monitoring systems at the national level

8. Experts agreed on the need to foster cooperation and the flow of information among various national and subnational entities that are the primary sources of data related to drugs. Efforts in that direction should address the needs for coordination and harmonization of statistical data across different institutions and jurisdictions, as well as between related but distinct spheres of competence (e.g. customs and police forces).

9. Expert highlighted the need to build and strengthen national systems for monitoring the drug problem, including information systems and the institutional and technical infrastructure to facilitate the collection, consolidation and analysis of data related to drugs. Participants underlined the importance of having national drug observatories that could set up and coordinate information systems to collect and analyse data on all facets of the drug problem in a given country.

B. Developing statistical methodologies on drugs

10. Several areas were identified in which the production of data on drugs would benefit greatly from methodological guidelines. These should address both the need for standardized and more precise definitions of certain indicators and the corresponding appropriate data sources, as well as the methods and statistical procedures that are most appropriate for the production of high-quality data.

11. Examples of topics where methodological guidance was needed include guidelines on the conduct of drug use surveys, the estimation of the size of the population in need of drug treatment, the production of consistent data on drug prices and the implementation of surveys among detainees. There was also mention of the need to develop a standardized approach to computations in relations to Sustainable Development Goal indicator 3.5.1 on the coverage of treatment interventions (pharmacological, psychosocial and rehabilitation and aftercare services) for substance use disorders.

C. Reviewing the annual report questionnaire

12. Experts highlighted the need to improve data collection on selected topics to better respond to the information needs deriving from the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action and the outcome document of the 2016 special session of the General Assembly. For example, topics in need of more comprehensive data included severe and high-risk drug users, persons in treatment, the health consequences of drug use

(morbidity and mortality), links between drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime, drug-related illicit financial flows, and drugs and the criminal justice system.

13. Ways to streamline the annual report questionnaire to minimize the reporting burden of countries and to enhance the response rate were discussed, including reviewing the scope and complexity of the questions, as well as exploring improvements to the structure of the questionnaire and to the data collection cycle.

14. Participants also agreed on the need to incorporate the gender dimension wherever relevant through the systematic sex-disaggregation of all relevant questions and the inclusion of questions that could highlight gender disparities, such as questions on morbidity, mortality, the provision of treatment services and criminal justice.

D. Strengthening expert networks at the regional and international levels

15. National experts highlighted the importance of establishing national, regional and global networks to foster the production and use of consistent, comprehensive and comparable data, and in providing a forum for the sharing of best practices and for peer support. Such networks could be especially productive at the regional level, given that they would facilitate the exchange of solutions among experts faced with similar circumstances and challenges.

16. Experts recognized that the appointment of national focal points, building on experience in the collection of data on crime and criminal justice through the UNODC-administered United Nations Survey of Crime Trends, Operations of Criminal Justice Systems and Crime Prevention Strategies, would facilitate an improvement in the quality and coverage of data collected through the annual report questionnaire.

E. Enhancing inter-agency cooperation

17. Data relevant to drugs are collected by a variety of international and regional bodies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Customs Organization, the International Narcotics Control Board, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission and the African Union. Areas of complementarity exist between UNODC and other international organizations, while areas of overlap may exist with regional entities. Experts stressed the importance of avoiding duplication of efforts and also recognized the need for harmonization of related concepts used in data collection by different entities.

18. Experts highlighted the need to consult with appropriate international stakeholders to ensure that developments in relation to the annual report questionnaire and other relevant data collection activities are efficient, avoid duplication of effort and better meet international commitments, such as the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, experts invited international entities to continue the dialogue within the inter-agency technical working group on drug epidemiology statistics, as this could have implications for the content of the annual report questionnaire.

19. Considering the reporting burden on countries, experts felt that it would be useful in the medium term to explore joint data collection with regional bodies on drugs data, as is currently the case with crime data in the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends, Operations of Criminal Justice Systems and Crime Prevention Strategies.

III. Current activities and next steps

20. The expert consultation provided a unique opportunity for national experts from all regions to engage in a technical discussion on common information needs and challenges with a view to advancing the scientific understanding of the drug problem. The meeting served as a forum to exchange practices and experiences to address such challenges. The deliberations among experts proved to be a valuable way to discuss concrete, effective and scientifically sound ways to improve national drug information systems and the quality and availability of drug-related data at the international level.

21. While recognizing the benefit of streamlining the annual report questionnaire and improving its effectiveness in describing the world drug problem, participants repeatedly highlighted the value of the annual report questionnaire as a tool to gather and make available key information about patterns, scope and trends in the various dimensions of the drug problem, both at the international and national levels. Besides its role in collecting and disseminating information, participants saw the annual report questionnaire as a tool to foster standardization of data processes and spur communication among relevant national stakeholders.

22. After the expert consultation and following the mandate by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the current focus of UNODC activities on drugs statistics has been on the review of the annual report questionnaire and on effective ways to support countries in improving the quality and availability of drugs statistics.

23. In addition to the regular activities related to global, regional and drug-specific monitoring systems and support for countries in conducting drug-related surveys (for example, to monitor drug use and illicit crops), new methodological work carried out by UNODC has focused on developing a statistical framework to measure illicit financial flows, including those related to illicit drugs, on improving drug-related mortality data and on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 3.5.1. Technical assistance and capacity-building activities have also been regularly conducted.

24. March 2019 will represent another milestone for the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. A ministerial segment, to be held during the sixty-second session of the Commission, will take stock of the implementation of the commitments made to jointly address and counter the world drug problem, in particular in the light of the 2019 target date established in the 2009 Political Declaration. In preparation for the high-level event, the Commission held a series of intersessional meetings in the lead up to the reconvened sixty-first session of the Commission, in December 2018. During those meetings, representatives of many countries highlighted the importance of promoting and improving the collection, gathering and sharing of reliable and comparable data, as well as possible synergies with Sustainable Development Goal indicators, as a priority for work in 2019 and beyond. Formal and informal discussions also dealt with how the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and Statistical Commission could collaborate to ensure that drugs statistics benefit from the policy directions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the technical statistical competence of the Statistical Commission.

25. UNODC plans to hold a second global consultation on drugs statistics in July 2019 to finalize a proposal for a revised annual report questionnaire and to better define a road map for developing global standards and supporting countries in generating more and higher quality data for the benefit of designing national policies and improving global knowledge of the drug problem. Such efforts would also help to measure progress made in the implementation of the joint commitments made over the past decade to address and counter the world drug problem, through a so-called "one-track approach" in 2019 and beyond. The consultation would represent an

opportunity to bring together experts from the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Statistical Commission and Member States to join forces to define the basis for the global impetus to improve drug information systems and ensure that drugs statistics are produced and disseminated in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

26. UNODC has also planned an assessment study to provide better targeted support to national systems that produce drugs statistics. The study will be based on a survey to be conducted by UNODC in partnership with international and regional partners to better understand the functioning, capacities and outputs of those national systems, the availability and quality of drugs statistics and how the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics are implemented in the production of drugs statistics. Findings from the assessment will be used to improve national and international reporting of drugs-related data and to conduct more targeted capacity-building activities.

IV. Recommendations

27. **The Statistical Commission may wish to:**

(a) **Affirm its renewed availability to collaborate with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on statistical matters relating to drugs and consider ways to further strengthen such a partnership with a view to improving the quality and availability of statistics on drugs. In particular, the Statistical Commission might consider ways to participate in the annual report questionnaire revision process and in the definition of a renewed plan to improve the quality and availability of drugs statistics;**

(b) **Invite national statistical offices to strengthen their participation in the production and dissemination of drugs statistics and in the improvement of related methodological standards, including on drug use surveys, illicit financial flows related to drugs, and drug-related morbidity and mortality;**

(c) **Invite national statistical offices to promote initiatives to foster the coordination of national institutions involved in drugs statistics;**

(d) **Invite UNODC, in partnership with other international agencies, to conduct a survey to better understand the functioning, capacities and outputs of national statistical systems on drugs, the availability and quality of drugs statistics and the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;**

(e) **Invite the donor community to strengthen global and regional efforts to support countries in improving national drugs statistics;**

(f) **Invite international and regional organizations, including the African Union, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, UNAIDS, UNODC, the World Customs Organization and WHO to strengthen their cooperation and collaboration in the field of drugs statistics with a view to increasing the consistency of data and minimizing the reporting burden of Member States.**

United Nations E/CN.3/2019/21

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 December 2018

Original: English

Statistical Commission
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Item 3 (r) of the provisional agenda*
Items for discussion and decision: education statistics

Report of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on education statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on education statistics. The Institute is the official source of cross-nationally comparable data on education; it is mandated to work with partners to develop new indicators, statistical approaches and monitoring tools to assess progress made in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4. The present report provides information on recent developments in international education statistics, in particular in the light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, regarding standards, methodologies, data collection and funding gaps, including financial aid. The 2030 Agenda requires high-quality, timely and disaggregated statistics to respond to new data needs and emerging challenges. The report includes information on the Institute's initiative to improve coordination and to implement global efforts to strengthen the capacity of national educational statistical systems. This involves expanding its current mandate to include brokerage, with the goal of improving the coordination of the investments of donors and countries. The Statistical Commission is invited to express its views and to provide guidance on the pillars and lines of action proposed by the Institute in its new brokerage role to support more integrated, better-quality, cost-effective and timely statistical data for education at the national level.

* E/CN.3/2019/1.

18-21129 (E) 090119

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Report of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on education statistics

I. Introduction

1. The present report addresses five items: (a) standards and methodologies; (b) data production; (c) new standards for learning outcome indicators; (d) leadership and coordination on Sustainable Development Goal 4: global and thematic indicators for Sustainable Development Goal; and (e) the proposal of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to better support capacity development for Sustainable Development Goal 4 data. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of the progress made in education statistics standards, methods and data collection and to express its views and provide guidance on the pillars and lines of action proposed by the Institute to support more integrated, better-quality, cost-effective and timely statistical data for education at the national level.

II. Standards and methodologies in education

A. Implementation of the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 and the 2013 revision of the International Standard Classification of Education Fields of Education and Training

2. Following the adoption of the 2011 revision of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) and the 2013 revision of the International Standard Classification of Education Fields of Education and Training (ISCED-F), the Institute and its partners in the collection of education-related data, Eurostat and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), adapted their education survey instruments to the new standards. The 2011 revision of levels of education and educational attainment was implemented in the 2014 round of surveys on education and educational attainment. The new classification for fields of education and training was introduced in the 2016 round of education surveys.

3. The Institute, Eurostat and OECD worked jointly on an operational manual for ISCED 2011, which was published in early 2015 in English, French and Spanish. Later in 2015, a document containing detailed field descriptions and correspondence tables between ISCED-F and previous classifications of fields of education was published online. Owing to the technical nature of the field descriptions, the document is currently available in English only.

4. In addition to providing technical documents supporting the implementation of the revised standard classifications, the Institute and its education data collection partners have worked with countries to produce comparisons, or "mappings", of national education programmes and qualifications with regard to ISCED 2011 in order to assist data users in interpreting the new education indicators. By the end of 2018, 170 mappings will be available on the Institute's website.

5. The vast majority of countries have made good progress in implementing ISCED 2011 in their international reporting of education and education attainment data, with many reporting ISCED 2011-compliant data for the fifth time and ISCED-F-compliant data for the third time in 2018.

B. Development of new statistical methodologies and standards

6. In order to improve the quality and use of financial statistics on education, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning and the UNESCO Office in Dakar and Regional Bureau for Education in Africa (Pôle de Dakar) have pooled their expertise to address the issue of educational expenditure statistics on the basis of the use of national accounts techniques, building on the theoretical framework of satellite accounts. The result of that collaborative work was the development and publication, in mid-2016, of a methodological guide on national education accounts, developed using the principles of existing international standards, such as the 2008 System of National Accounts and ISCED 2011, and building on previous experience in that area. A national education accounts exercise is a comprehensive education finance data collection, processing and analysis exercise that covers all education levels, from pre-school, primary and tertiary, including vocational training. It includes all sources of funding, at all levels of government and both private and external sources, and all types of education providers, whether public or private. It serves as a logical and systematic framework for the analysis of education financing flows.

III. Data production

A. Global education surveys

7. In 2018, the education data collection of the Institute for Statistics included the following seven core education questionnaires, administered globally and collecting data on the following themes:

(a) Students and teachers for ISCED levels 0 to 4;

(b) Educational expenditure for ISCED levels 0 to 8;

(c) Students and teachers for ISCED levels 5 to 8;

(d) National education systems;

(e) Involvement in the development, processing and dissemination of the UNESCO-OECD-Eurostat survey of formal education;

(f) Literacy;

(g) Educational attainment.

8. Compared with the Institute's previous report to the Statistical Commission, in 2016 (E/CN.3/2016/28), the main changes in the content and format of the Institute's education survey were the following:

(a) The content of the core questionnaires described above was revised to extend the scope of the survey to align with the need to monitor the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. As part of a redesign process, new variables were added, while others – those with very low response rates or low relevance – were removed in order to streamline the survey design and reduce the burden on respondents;

(b) The global and regional teacher's modules and the school resources in the Africa module were discontinued in 2017, and the parts of their content relevant to Sustainable Development Goal 4 monitoring were integrated into the core questionnaires of the Survey of Formal Education;

(c) In order to improve the timeliness of the data disseminated by the Institute, the annual launch of the Survey of Formal Education was advanced by several months, starting from the 2018 round, to allow for the collection and dissemination of data for the reference year (now year t+1 instead of year t+2, as previously). Moreover, the annual timetable for data dissemination has been adjusted accordingly to provide one main education data release in September of each year and a release of updated data a few months later.

9. The Institute will continue to lead the review and collaborate with relevant international organizations, including its education data collection partners, OECD and Eurostat. The priorities for the Institute in the coming years will be the improvement of the quality of data collected through its surveys to produce better-quality data for Sustainable Development Goal 4 indicators and to support countries, especially those with limited statistical capacity, in improving their ability to collect and report data. Priorities also include the establishment of data compilation and reporting mechanisms to promote innovation using new technologies and data at the national level and improve data reporting at the international level, while reducing the reporting burden on countries. To inform that approach, the Institute has already conducted a thorough profile analysis of country non-response and is reviewing strategies to support national statistical capacity-building.

B. Education data from household surveys

10. The Institute is guiding the work of two groups dedicated to the use of education indicators calculated on the basis of household survey data: the Inter-Agency Group on Education Inequality Indicators, and a task force for education spending estimates based on household survey data of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys.

11. A focus on equity is a key feature of the Sustainable Development Goals, which are driven by the objective to leave no one behind. In order to address challenges in measuring equity, the Inter-Agency Group on Education Inequality Indicators was established in 2016 to promote inter-agency coordination. Led by the Institute, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank, the Group also includes other organizations involved in the production and use of household survey data (for example, the reports of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, the Global Partnership for Education, the International Community Foundation (ICF), OECD, RTI International and the United States Agency for International Development) and aims to promote the use of household survey data for the purposes of monitoring education at the global, regional and national levels, ensuring standardized analysis and reporting in order to complement evidence available through administrative data.

12. Among its activities, the Inter-Agency Group on Education Inequality Indicators is drafting guidelines for the calculation of global and thematic Sustainable Development Goal 4 indicators from household survey data. The initial focus of the Group was on seven indicators: 4.1.4, completion rate; 4.1.5, out-of-school rate; 4.1.6, percentage of children overage for grade; 4.2.2, participation rate in organized learning one year before the official primary entry age; 4.2.4, gross early childhood education enrolment ratio; 4.3.2, gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education; and 4.5.1, parity indices. At its latest meeting, in December 2017, the Group reviewed quality standards for the reporting of indicators calculated from household surveys.

13. To improve the quality and use of financial statistics on education, the Institute and the World Bank collaborated on a publication entitled *Measuring Household Expenditure on Education: A Guidebook for designing household survey questionnaires*. This work was carried out by the task force for education spending

estimates based on household survey data of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys. The *Guidebook* contains methodological guidelines and recommendations for collecting data on household expenditure on education through sample surveys.

14. With the publication of the *Guidebook*, the Institute and the World Bank aim to: improve data availability for the calculation of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 4.5.4 (education expenditure per student by level of education and source of funding); ensure proper representation of education expenditures in consumption-based poverty and inequality measures; and enable more microeconometric research on resource allocation in households. The work is closely aligned with the national education accounts methodology, developed in 2016 by the Institute for Statistics the International Institute for Educational Planning and the Office in Dakar and Regional Bureau for Education in Africa (Pôle de Dakar), as described in paragraph 6 above.

IV. New standards for learning outcomes indicators

15. In 2018, the Institute made considerable progress in the area of learning outcomes. This encompasses efforts aimed at developing new methodologies to report learning outcomes, tools to assess national learning assessment systems and documents supporting the implementation of learning assessments, as well as advocating for a common learning metric. The Institute also moved ahead with respect to data collection on learning outcomes.

16. The Global Alliance to Monitor Learning is making steady progress in defining the learning outcomes indicators of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 monitoring framework. The first step for all of these indicators is the development of detailed frameworks that can serve as a reference to teach, develop and assess children, young people and adults. These frameworks play a key role in guiding countries to produce Sustainable Development Goal 4 data.

17. As part of efforts to develop indicator 4.1.1, the Institute, in partnership with the International Bureau of Education, has developed global frameworks of reference for reading and mathematics. Both frameworks were the focus of in-depth consultations among national and international assessment experts. Moreover, the Institute is currently in the process of publishing an online interactive data capture tool that will allow national respondents to enter data using a series of questions in order to create a dialogue between the respondents and the Institute.

18. As part of efforts aimed at developing indicator 4.4.2, the Institute has developed a global framework of reference on digital literacy skills. The first step involved a technical review of more than 40 digital literacy frameworks used by countries throughout all regions and at all income levels, as well as those of regional and international assessment initiatives. In addition, the project team prepared an analysis of the digital literacy skills used in major economic sectors, with a specific focus on developing countries. The draft framework was subject to an expert consultation, followed by a wider online consultation, after which the final version was published by the Institute and approved by the Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Education 2030.[1]

19. In terms of reporting and to ensure that a minimum set of contents and procedures are followed, the Institute has produced a content alignment tool and a

[1] The Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Education 2030 serves as a platform for the discussion and development of the indicators used for monitoring the Education 2030 targets in an open, inclusive and transparent manner; more details are available at: http://tcg.uis.unesco.org.

procedural alignment tool that will be used to review the alignment of national learning assessment frameworks with the global content framework and to ensure that national learning assessment procedures are sufficiently rigorous and have acceptable standards. Countries can use the tools to evaluate their procedures in the implementation of national learning assessments. The tools are accompanied by an online platform that enables mapping and contains instructions on interpreting results.

20. To better support and guide countries, the Institute is producing a series of "quick guides" as part of its capacity-development efforts: *Quick Guide No. 2: Making the Case for a Learning Assessment* helps countries to navigate learning assessment reforms; and *Quick Guide No. 3: Implementing a National Learning Assessment* provides step-by-step instructions on conducting a learning assessment at the country level and offers guidance on what, who and how to measure. *Guide* No. 3 is an easy-to-use reference that describes the various stages of the process, from data collection and analysis to the dissemination of results. The Institute has also mapped the costs and needs of funding from countries regarding learning assessments.

21. The Catalogue of Learning Assessments is an Institute initiative to compile standardized information on various aspects of learning, or skills, assessments in countries throughout the world. The Institute implemented the first version of the Catalogue in 2014 and 2015. The information collected will not only support the monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal 4, but will also help countries to evaluate and improve the quality and robustness of their assessment or examination systems. Version 2.0 of the Catalogue 2.0 consists of seven modules, which contain questionnaires on the following areas:

(a) General information on learning assessments;

(b) General information on early childhood development assessments;

(c) Results from household-based assessments on digital literacy skills;

(d) Results from household-based assessments on functional literacy and numeracy skills;

(e) Results from household-based assessments on information and communications technology skills;

(f) Results from school-based assessments;

(g) Results on early childhood development.

22. The Institute has published a database on national learning assessments and citizen-led assessment data for indicator 4.1.1. Additional efforts are under way to expand and strengthen the current database in the near future.

23. The Institute website hosts a learning outcomes dashboard that maps existing learning assessments in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 4 indicators. The dashboard is a visualization containing the inventory of learning assessment survey questions from existing instruments to help to guide countries and stakeholders through examples of how to frame questions and what indicators the questions are informing. The exercise will help country-level and international users to gain a vital new set of tools that can support them in tracking and achieving an inclusive and equitable high-quality education and in promoting lifelong learning opportunities for everyone while facilitating the harmonization process.

24. The Institute has finalized a publication entitled "Sustainable Development Goal 4 Data Digest 2018: Data to Nurture Learning", which addresses the complex issue of learning outcomes and presents a compilation of the most comprehensive and up-to-date work by international experts and relevant institutions to inform the learning indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 4. The digest also presents

learning evidence concerning early child development, mathematics and reading skills for school-aged children and digital and work-related skills for young people and adults.

25. In addition, for the purpose of monitoring Sustainable Development Goal 4, the Institute has developed a mini-Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme, a publicly accessible tool for the production of data relevant to reporting indicator 4.6.1, proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex. The programme provides a list of documents organized by process, which guides countries, step by step, towards the implementation of literacy assessments. It can be implemented as a stand-alone module within a household survey or as a dedicated survey.

V. Leadership and coordination in Sustainable Development Goal 4: global and thematic indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 4

26. The Institute leads and coordinates the work of the Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Education 2030 and the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning.

27. As noted in paragraph 16 above, the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning is making progress in defining the learning outcomes indicators of the monitoring framework for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, including the development of frameworks that can serve as a guide to teach, develop and assess children, young people and adults.

28. To lead the development and implementation of thematic indicators for education, in May 2016, the Institute and the UNESCO Division for Education 2030 Support and Coordination convened the Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Education 2030. The Technical Group provides a platform for the discussion and development, in an inclusive and transparent manner, of the indicators used to monitor targets. It provides recommendations to the Institute on the actions needed to improve data availability and on the development of methodologies to produce thematic indicators for the follow-up and review of Sustainable Development Goal 4. The Group includes experts from 38 Member States, international partners (OECD, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank) and civil society organizations (Education International and the Collective Consultation of Non-Governmental Organizations on Education 2030) and the Co-Chair of the Sustainable Development Goal Education 2030 Steering Committee.

29. Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Education 2030 Framework for Action consists of 43 thematic indicators, including the 11 global monitoring indicators determined by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators of the Statistical Commission. Each global indicator is focused on the outcomes of a specific target for Sustainable Development Goal 4, whereas the broader set of thematic indicators is designed to cover the wider agenda and other factors that should be addressed in order to achieve each target.

30. The Technical Cooperation Group met in January 2018 and agreed on a set of 33 indicators, 11 global and 22 thematic, for reporting in 2018. The remaining 10 thematic indicators, which were identified as requiring further development, were addressed by the working group on indicator development of the Group in 2018, and this work will continue in 2019. In addition, 6 of the indicators for reporting in 2018,

most of them global, will require further development. The Group also decided that UNESCO should make a formal request to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to change the tier classification for indicator 4.7.1 from III to II. More details on the meetings of the Group are available at its website (http://tcg.uis.unesco.org).

31. To improve the availability and accessibility of data on education, the Institute is improving its website (http://tcg.uis.unesco.org) and adding new dissemination platforms for Sustainable Development Goal 4 indicators. New data visualizations highlight the most recent national data, trends over time and disparities between various population groups. Country profiles developed by the Institute serve as a resource for national policy planners, donors and other stakeholders.

32. With its September 2018 data release, the Institute began to disseminate data for the following three indicators for which a methodology was approved at the meeting of the Technical Cooperation Group in January 2018: (a) 4.7.2 (percentage of schools that provide life skills-based HIV and sexuality education); (b) 4.a.2 (percentage of students experiencing bullying); and (c) 4.a.3 (number of attacks on students, personnel and institutions). The Institute is also expanding its database of disaggregated education indicators calculated from household survey data. Recent additions include indicator 4.3.2, the gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education, disaggregated by sex, location and wealth quintile.

33. The Institute has prepared several publications and other products, designed to provide Member States and other stakeholders with methodological guidance on the collection, analysis and use of education data, in particular in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 4 indicators. They include the following:

(a) *Quick Guide to Education Indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 4*;

(b) *Sustainable Development Goal 4 Data Book: Global Education Indicators 2018*;

(c) Sustainable Development Goal 4 Data Explorer;

(d) Sustainable Development Goal 4 Country Profiles;

(e) *Quick Guide No. 2: Making the Case for a Learning Assessment*;

(f) *Quick Guide No.3: Implementing a National Learning Assessment*;

(g) High-level Political Forum 2018: Contribution from the Sustainable Development Goal-Education 2030 Steering Committee;

(h) *Quick Guide: Use of household surveys for Sustainable Development Goal 4 monitoring*;

(i) *Quick Guide: Implementation of a household Survey for Sustainable Development Goal 4 monitoring*;

(j) E-handbook on Sustainable Development Goal indicators (Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat);

(k) *Sustainable Development Goal 4 Data Digest 2018: Data to Nurture Learning*.

34. The Institute has published a Global Strategy for Education Data with an innovative demand side approach and an investment case for Sustainable Development Goal 4. In the concept note, the case is made for greater investment in the data needed to chart progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4. In addition, a blog and a white paper were published in the run-up to a financing conference of the Global Partnership for Education, held in Dakar in February 2018.

The object of the meeting was to secure pledges from donors in order to ensure the future education of no fewer than 870 million children.

35. In order to monitor Sustainable Development Goal 4 adequately and effectively, it will be necessary to spend $280 million per year. That figure is based on estimates of the costs of strengthening and maintaining education management information systems in all countries, including other data sources in addition to those based on administrative records, and ensuring global coverage in surveys. The other data sources include multipurpose school and household surveys and learning assessments and community-level data, which, if efficiently organized, could enable reporting on multiple indicators. Also factored in is the use of technology for improved data collection, analysis and use, not only for policy dialogue and decision-making, but also to inform action and monitor progress.

36. Currently, it is estimated that the amount spent on Sustainable Development Goal 4 monitoring is $148 million per year and that the majority of that amount is used to support monitoring in upper-middle- and high-income countries. To meet the shortfall of $132 million per year, it will be necessary to increase the amount of national and external resources allocated to this activity. It is estimated that external financing, or aid, to low- and lower-middle-income countries for the purpose of monitoring the Goal will need to increase by up to $60 million per year over current levels, through 2030. In addition, all countries will have to increase their national expenditures on monitoring Sustainable Development Goal 4 by one third.

37. Learning assessments and household, or multipurpose, surveys are relatively new sources of data that will be the focus of a significant part of the additional funding for monitoring. In the light of the rapid growth of international, regional and national assessments in the past two decades, countries have several options from which to choose in order to monitor and develop capacity regarding the learning outcome-related indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 4. Nevertheless, for many low- and middle-income countries, inadequate financing remains a significant obstacle to participating in cross-national assessments or conducting national ones. If additional national and external resources are not mobilized quickly for this purpose, opportunities for advancing the monitoring of learning and driving improvements in quality will be lost.

38. For many low- and middle-income countries, capacity development, including the support necessary for global and regional coordination and monitoring, is required in order to strengthen education management information systems and expand the coverage of data and improve its quality.

VI. Institute for Statistics proposal to update capacity development for Sustainable Development Goal 4 data

39. Ensuring and maximizing the effectiveness of financing for capacity development is essential for the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 agenda. Support for statistical capacity-building has been supply-driven and piecemeal, with little emphasis placed on the demand for data from partner countries, and has, in many cases, been more focused on the needs of external stakeholders. While resources are a problem, the approach has been somewhat flawed. In many cases, external consultants have been carrying out the work of the statistical agencies – an approach described by OECD as fixing a broken piece in the data machine – which does not help the system to develop its capacity to repair itself in the future. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century includes a study of the setbacks and failures of that older approach to capacity development. The approach changed in 2016, when the Cape Town Global Action

Plan for Sustainable Development Data of the Statistical Commission was proposed. The plan, which was finalized in 2017, defined the role of development cooperation providers by a demand-driven approach, supporting better coordination.

40. The Institute has proven to be a strong vehicle for addressing technical solutions and providing strong political platforms for collaboration and driving consensus. Nevertheless, there is a need to improve coordination and support for countries. As described above, the Institute proposes to upgrade its mandate, adding a brokerage function. This function consists of information-sharing, networking and coordinating support, with the objective of guiding donors' and countries' investments and better coordinating recipients and donors in order to produce more integrated, better-quality, more cost-effective and timely statistical data for education.

A. Pillars of the new approach

41. A demand-driven approach: one of the main issues that characterizes the education data ecosystem is that mandated agencies aggregate and disseminate massive amounts of data with no clear connection with the needs of users – basically, countries – and other stakeholders, donors, among others. The agencies represent one of the suppliers of the ecosystem. The countries are producers and, to some extent, suppliers of data, but they also provide the demand that needs the data, along with development partners and other stakeholders, for policy-related and other decisions. To summarize the complexity of the situation, countries are not only suppliers of data to themselves and the global community, but they also demanders of funding. Donors and development agencies, on the other hand, are demanders of data and suppliers of funding and technical assistance.

42. An understanding of the education data eco-system by mapping needs and opportunities: more, and better, information is needed on the following two issues:

(a) What are the most essential data items that data-supplying countries are willing to produce on their own because the items reflect information considered crucial for the proper functioning of their education systems and require technical capacities that the countries do not have and, hence, require donor support?;

(b) What are the key incentives and restrictions that donor countries and agencies face when deciding the kind of data that they are willing to fund and that make it difficult for them to act in a coordinated way in providing funding for data that countries produce?

43. Integration of data sources into the national statistical system: the data collection systems used in education include various data sources: administrative data, sociodemographic and population data, household surveys, learning assessments and special surveys that are, in general, fragmented and not used productively. What is needed is an integrated approach that countries can use, and that includes various sources of information, to facilitate the maximum utilization of national data by the countries that produce it.

44. It is essential to develop an integrated management system that maximizes the use of existing education data in order to reduce the data burden and weed out data that have little impact on education policy, as well as to take advantage of the various sources of information.

B. Main lines of action

45. The function of the Institute is not primarily to provide funding, but to share information and act as a broker among users, innovators, suppliers and funders. To bring order to the ecosystem for educational data, it will be necessary to follow a long-term plan with the following six components:

(a) A quick assessment of data demand among recipient countries, country by country, rather than an average sense of needs to support countries in their efforts and provide information about practices;

(b) A mapping of institutional barriers and incentives among donor agencies and donor countries to assess the incentives and constraints in their support of data production and dissemination at the following three levels: (i) recipient countries; (ii) international organizations in charge of multi-country initiatives; and (iii) bilateral arrangements;

(c) Increased value based on improved dissemination, aimed at guidelines for investment, with alternatives regarding cost, funding and options;

(d) A clearinghouse for technical guidelines;

(e) Regional and national engagement strategies: mapping of national Sustainable Development Goal 4 focal points, definition of an engagement strategy at the national level and coordination with regional organizations to ensure alignment and harmonization at the national, regional and global levels;

VII. Action required by the Statistical Commission

46. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of the progress made in the standards, methods and data collection of education statistics and to express its views and provide guidance on the pillars and lines of action proposed by the Institute to support more integrated, better-quality, cost-effective and timely statistical data for education at the national level, as described in the present report.

United Nations E/CN.3/2019/22

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 December 2018

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Fiftieth session
5–8 March 2019
Item 3 (s) of the provisional agenda*
Items for discussion and decision: working methods of the Statistical Commission

Report of the Bureau on the working methods of the Statistical Commission: comprehensive review of the structure and functions of groups

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Bureau on the review of the working methods of the Statistical Commission, with a focus on the structure and functions of groups operating under the Commission. The report explores the complexity of this statistical machinery and the extent to which it operates in a coordinated and coherent manner.

Points for discussion by the Commission are listed in paragraph 39.

* E/CN.3/2019/1.

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Report of the Bureau on the working methods of the Statistical Commission: comprehensive review of the structure and functions of groups

I. Introduction

1. After discussing the report of the Bureau on working methods with a focus on the city group mechanism (E/CN.3/2018/20) during its forty-ninth session, the Statistical Commission agreed that there was a need to improve its oversight function. In that context, the Commission requested the Bureau to prepare a comprehensive review of the structure and functions of all types of groups operating under the Commission for consideration at the fiftieth session of the Commission (see E/2018/24-E/CN.3/2018/37, chap. I, sect. B, decision 49/119).

2. Over the years, numerous groups have been established under the auspices of the Commission in order to examine topics of methodological interest, to develop normative documents and to coordinate the work of multiple actors. Typically, the outputs produced by the groups have been submitted to the Commission for discussion and eventually for endorsement. These working methods have allowed the Commission to fulfil the high expectations associated with being the highest body of the global statistical system. Collaborative work has resulted in a myriad of accomplishments in established and emerging areas of statistics, making the Commission a successful body of the Economic and Social Council in terms of the quality of the concrete outputs delivered.

3. However, it is often difficult to secure financing for the performance of mandated work and for the attendance of countries at the related meetings. In addition, the internal structure of the groups operating under the Commission and, most importantly, the interlinkages among them are often clear only to those who are directly involved in the work of particular groups, and not to the wider statistical community. Furthermore, there may be a degree of overlap among interlinked groups. With this in mind, at its forty-ninth session, the Commission encouraged all groups to cooperate and create more synergy in their work (ibid.).

4. Currently, a total of 40 groups operate under the Statistical Commission. The present report offers a comprehensive overview of the various types of groups that are currently operating and explores potential issues with a view to streamlining the current arrangements in order to achieve more coordinated and coherent working methods. The report is based on a desk review carried out on behalf of the Bureau by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat[1] and is intended to continue the discussion on the current working methods of the Commission that started with the examination of the city group mechanism during the forty-ninth session.

5. The review included official documentation submitted to the Commission since 2010 (forty-first session). During that period, a total of 56 groups have submitted at least one report to the Commission. Sixteen of those groups have completed their work or have been replaced by another mechanism, while 40 remain active. Similar reviews of the groups operating under the Commission have been conducted in past years, notably the report of the Review Group on strengthening international statistical cooperation, also known as the "Begeer report" (E/CN.3/AC.1/1992/R.2), the report on the implementation of the Review Group proposals on strengthening international statistical cooperation, also known as the "McLennan report"

[1] A detailed table and a summary table of the desk review will be made available as background documents on the website of the Statistics Division.

(E/CN.3/1997/23), and the report of the ad hoc group established by the Commission to generate ideas to further enhance international statistical cooperation (E/CN.3/1999/23).

II. The current situation: summary and findings of the review

6. As noted in the previous report of the Bureau on working methods (E/CN.3/2018/20), the global statistical system [2] is characterized by voluntary cooperation between Member States in the development of methodological aspects of statistics and in the adoption of international standards and the accompanying implementation manuals.

A. Group nomenclature

7. The arrangements and mandates of various groups operating under the Commission reflect a spirit of inclusiveness and collective ownership. In order to address the wealth and breadth of official statistics, 10 distinct types of groups can be identified. The group nomenclature is thus composed of the following types: city groups, friends of the Chair groups, task forces, working groups, expert groups, committees, inter-agency and expert groups, partnerships, high-level groups and networks. [3] The table below provides a breakdown of the types of groups by sustainable development pillar.

Number of active groups under the Statistical Commission by type of group and pillar, December 2018

	Pillar				
Type of group	*Economic*	*Environmental*	*Social*	*Cross-cutting*	*Total number of groups in type*
City groups	4	2	3	–	9
Friends of the Chair groups	–	–	–	1	1
Task forces	2	–	–	1	3
Working groups	3	2	2	1	8
Expert groups	2	1	2	3	8
Partnerships	–	–	–	1	1
Committees	1	2	–	2	5
Inter-agency and expert groups	–	1	1	1	3
Other groups[a]	–	–	–	2	2
Total	**12**	**8**	**8**	**12**	**40**

[a] Other groups include high-level groups and networks.

[2] The global statistical system is loosely understood here as the set of national, regional and international statistical offices collaborating within the framework of the Statistical Commission.

[3] See annex I (also available as a background document) for a graphic presentation of all active groups.

B. Group lifespan

8. Almost half of the active groups (19) were established by the Commission before 2010, while 13 groups were formed fairly recently, in 2015 or thereafter. Only eight active groups were established between 2010 and 2014.

C. Group composition

9. In an effort to understand the composition of the different types of groups, their membership and chairmanship were also examined. From that analysis, a number of findings can be drawn:

(a) All 40 active groups have at least one United Nations agency as a member, and 34 of them have at least one non-United Nations agency among their members;

(b) Only 27 groups count Member States in their membership. When they do belong to a group, however, Member States are very likely to take the lead. Indeed, out of the 27 groups, 23 are chaired or co-chaired by Member States;

(c) Academic institutions and civil society organizations are most commonly engaged in city groups, but they also play a role in other types of groups. Examples, apart from city groups, include the Friends of the Chair group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics and the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics. In total, eight groups have at least one academic institution or civil society organization in their membership;

(d) Furthermore, the members of 26 groups work at the technical level; these include all the city groups, all the expert groups and all the inter-agency and expert groups, plus several other groups of different types;

(e) Fourteen groups are composed of representatives at the managerial level, including most of the working groups and all the committees, as well as other types of groups, such as the Friends of the Chair group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange sponsors, and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

D. Other governance characteristics

10. More than half (23) of the groups have an internal substructure, meaning that they have established their own subgroups. Those subgroups can take a variety of shapes, forms, denominations and functions, including task teams, working groups, management groups, advisory groups and technical committees.

11. These arrangements show some of the entangled complexity of governance facing the Commission, which will be discussed in the following section.

E. Mandates and functions

12. Turning to the substantive element, the first step in the analysis was to examine the active groups through the lens of the three pillars of sustainable development, namely, the economic, environmental and social pillars. The work of the groups operating under the Commission is somewhat concentrated in the economic statistics pillar (12 out of 40 groups). In addition, a fourth category was used to cluster 12 groups whose work cuts across the three substantive pillars.

13. In terms of technical focus and on the basis of their mandate, groups can be classified into one or more of the areas under the purview of the Commission[4] as follows:[5]

(a) Methodology, which primarily involves the development of a statistical standard (or normative document), including its revisions and accompanying manuals and handbooks;

(b) Coordination, which entails coordinating statistical activities among multiple stakeholders;

(c) Capacity development, which involves conducting capacity development activities, including training, skills development and technical assistance;

(d) Data, which relates to carrying out technical research and development regarding data.

14. Reflecting the technical work of the Commission, the majority of the mandates, almost regardless of the type of group in question, are geared towards methodology. Indeed, 30 out of the 40 active groups are developing or improving statistical standards. Notably, all city groups are performing methodological work, as are all expert groups and all inter-agency and expert groups. This set of groups overlaps heavily with the groups whose membership is of a technical level or nature (see para. 9 above).

15. The Commission has also issued a mandate of coordination to a number of groups in order to achieve harmonization and avoid duplication of efforts. Eighteen groups have been established with this purpose in mind. Not surprisingly, half of those groups are either inter-agency or intersecretariat groups. In addition, all committees fulfil coordination functions, with statistical domains ranging from very specific subjects (such as agricultural statistics or business statistics) to the whole spectrum of statistics (as in the case of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities).

16. It is not uncommon for the Commission to give the groups rather broad mandates; therefore, they may perform a combination of activities and have a multi-pronged technical focus.[6] In fact, 12 of the 40 active groups are in such a situation, with the most common combination being methodology and coordination. Examples of groups with this combination include the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts, the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information and the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting.

17. There are groups with different twofold combinations of mandates, such as coordination and data (e.g., the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics), methodology and data (e.g., the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange sponsors), methodology and capacity development (e.g., the Washington Group on Disability Statistics) and capacity development and coordination (e.g., the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training), and even a threefold combination of capacity development, coordination and data in the case of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics.

[4] See Economic and Social Council resolutions 8 (II) and 1566 (L) for details on the terms of reference of the Statistical Commission.

[5] See annex II for a detailed breakdown of active groups by technical focus and type of group.

[6] The choice of technical focus (methodology, coordination, capacity development or data) was determined on the basis of an analysis of the mandate and of publicly available information; in some cases, the Bureau consulted the Secretariat in order to better understand the activities performed by the groups.

18. Capacity development and data are two areas of work that are typically covered by the Secretariat, meaning that the groups operating under the Commission are less active in those spheres.[7] However, a few instances are worth noting, including the recently established Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training, which was created for the specific purpose of building sustainable capacities in-country. In turn, the technical focus on data is highly geared towards the use of modern technologies for official statistics and is thus taken forward by the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange sponsors and more recently by the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics.

F. Topics

19. The Bureau also looked at the statistical domain[8] in which each group carries out its work, in order to identify clusters or "families" of groups.[9] These families are found in the economic statistics and environmental statistics pillars, as shown below (ordered by size of cluster):

(a) Business and trade family (seven groups), composed of the Expert Group on International Trade and Economic Globalization Statistics, the Intersecretariat Working Group on International Trade and Economic Globalization Statistics, the Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics, the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics, the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics, the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers and the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics;

(b) National accounts family (three groups), composed of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance Statistics;

(c) Prices family (two groups), composed of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics and the Ottawa Group on Price Indices;

(d) Environment family (two groups), composed of the Expert Group on Environment Statistics and the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics;

(e) Energy family (two groups), composed of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics and the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics;

(f) Environmental accounts family (two groups), composed of the London Group on Environmental Accounting and the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting;

(g) Agriculture and rural family (two groups), composed of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics and the Global Strategy Steering Committee.

20. Interlinkages between the statistical domains of groups are not as explicit or evident in the social pillar. Perhaps the only thematic family would be migration (two groups), which comprises the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics

[7] See annex II, which shows the groups broken down by technical focus, and the background document containing the summary table of the comprehensive review.

[8] Based on the Classification of International Statistical Activities, available on the website of the Statistics Division.

[9] This is better observed in the graphic presentation of all active groups; see annex I and background document.

and the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics. The rest of the groups under the social statistics pillar seem to be stand-alone elements.

21. In the case of groups whose work is of a cross-cutting nature, two families can be identified:

(a) 2030 Agenda (three groups), comprising the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training;

(b) Overall coordination (two groups), comprising the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities and the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System. In this case, the latter is effectively a subset of the former.

22. The rest of the groups in the cross-cutting category seem to be stand-alone elements.

23. Finally, it is worth noting that two groups formed by the Commission seem to be dormant, namely, the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics and the Intersecretariat Working Group on International Trade and Economic Globalization Statistics. In this context, it is noted that the latter group will be part of an evaluation of groups within the business and trade family that is planned for 2019, precisely with a view to streamlining the groups in that family (see E/CN.3/2019/10). Regarding the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics, the Bureau received an update from the World Health Organization stating that the group would resume its activities (see E/CN.3/2019/24).

III. Where we go from here

A. Streamlining group arrangements to achieve coherent and coordinated working methods

24. The wide range of statistical areas covered by the groups under the Commission is indeed impressive. At the same time, it is evident that the structure of the groups would benefit from more orderly arrangements. Streamlining the structure of groups and families of groups across pillars could help produce more coherent and coordinated outputs, and it could also go a long way in terms of outreach to the broader international community.

25. Although it might be known intuitively, as a first step it would be very useful to clarify the differences between the different types of groups, for example, whether there are any guidelines to follow in terms of the membership of each type of group; the difference between a working group, an expert group and a task force in terms of the types of outputs and activities; and whether the more recently established committees of experts are different from expert groups and, if so, how they differ.

26. In addition, there are three intersecretariat working groups that are technical in nature and four others whose work is rather managerial. The question arises of whether this type should be streamlined into two distinct types of group, for instance by using the term "working group" for technical work and "committee" for a managerial focus.

27. The Bureau noted "twin" arrangements within families of groups, with one technical group dealing with methodological issues and one managerial group dealing with coordination and strategic issues. Examples of such twin arrangements are found in agricultural and rural statistics (Inter-Agency and Expert Group and Global

Strategy Steering Committee), environmental accounting (London Group and Committee of Experts), price statistics (Ottawa Group and Intersecretariat Working Group), national accounts (Advisory Expert Group and Intersecretariat Working Group) and in the statistical work relating to the 2030 Agenda (Inter-Agency and Expert Group and High-level Group).

28. Although the nomenclature of the groups varies from one family to another, which can be confusing and touches upon the need to streamline naming conventions, the twin technical-managerial arrangement holds in the examples cited above. This approach, if deemed a good practice, might be replicated in other vast statistical domains for more coherent working methods.

29. The family of groups related to business and trade is the largest and includes a mix of managerial and technical groups. The interlinkages and reporting lines within this family, or any other particular family of groups, for that matter, might be obvious to those who work in close proximity to it in a well-defined statistical domain. They are, however, not as obvious to outsiders and, what is more, might not hold elsewhere.

30. In fact, the Bureau has observed that there are currently different arrangements and understandings in place that very much depend on the statistical domain in question. For instance, in national accounts, there is a standing or permanent expert group that deals with all research issues from a technical point of view and works on the elaboration of accompanying manuals and revisions to the relevant standard. On the other hand, in the areas of business and trade, migration and other demographic and social statistics, expert groups are not standing or permanent, but convened on an ad hoc basis. This means that different kinds of experts are convoked according to the standard being revised or the manual being elaborated.

31. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages, and both present a number of trade-offs, such as consistency versus flexibility. As a result, the Commission should reflect on those trade-offs and advise as to the preferred (default) choice.

32. Similarly, the practices for reporting to the Commission are also not uniform or consistent, in particular in the case of city groups. Some city groups have traditionally reported through reports for information,[10] as in the case of the Ottawa, Delhi and Voorburg Groups, while others have submitted reports both for information and for decision-making when seeking explicit endorsement for a concrete output (e.g., the Wiesbaden, Oslo, Washington and Praia Groups). Yet another group (the London Group) reports only indirectly via another group in the same family. Again, the Commission would benefit from establishing clearer guidelines in this respect.

33. As noted in the previous report of the Bureau on working methods, city groups were created by the Commission as a particular kind of group that would enjoy more freedom and flexibility. In discussions during the forty-ninth session of the Commission, participants highlighted the importance of ensuring transparency in the work and activities of the city groups while preserving their flexibility. As a result, care must be taken to ensure that city group outputs are integrated appropriately into the international system of statistical norms and subsequently implemented effectively. To this end, interlinkages and reporting lines to the other groups, in particular within families, should be explicit.

[10] As suggested in the report of the Bureau on the review of working methods during the thirty-sixth session (E/CN.3/2005/2) and the report of the Commission on its thirty-sixth session (E/2005/24-E/CN.3/2005/27).

B. Possible actions of the Commission to enhance coherence and coordination and thus improve its oversight and guidance function

34. Statistics and data have become more central to national and international decision-making; moreover, they have become more interrelated and integrated, especially in the context of the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, the Commission must focus more on coordination in its overall outputs and functioning, in particular in a resource-constrained environment globally.

35. Whereas at one time the statistical community may have operated in substantial isolation, the situation has now changed. The increasing interest of non-official data partners and even users in participating in the work of some groups is also a factor for improving coherence and coordination if the Commission wishes to forge trusted and strong partnerships.

36. At its forty-ninth session, the Commission encouraged all groups to cooperate and create more synergy in their work; it may wish to ask the Chair of each active group to vigorously discuss the interlinkages and streamlining opportunities with other Chairs within the same family of groups and to report back to the Commission. This could be done for each pillar, with the assistance of the Secretariat. Some efforts have been initiated already; in the economic pillar, for example, the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics aims to strengthen the governance of groups in the same family. This practice, if deemed successful, could also be implemented for the other statistical domains.

37. In addition, a new group (e.g., a Friends of the Chair group) could also be formed and tasked with elaborating a model arrangement for families of groups in consultation with the Chairs of the active groups operating under the auspices of the Commission. In the same spirit, cross-participation of Chairs and members of groups within the same family, or in different families of groups, could be encouraged by the Commission as a good practice for coordination and communication.

38. Furthermore, the Commission could also assign particular members of the Bureau to each pillar with a view to providing standing oversight and guidance with respect to current and potential groups. In this way, with support from the Secretariat, assigned members of the Bureau could review the structure of group families within each pillar.

IV. Points for discussion

39. **The Commission is invited to express its views on the following:**

(a) **Whether the Commission should request the Chair of each active group to vigorously discuss the interlinkages and possible overlaps with other Chairs within the same group family and to report back on their findings and streamlining efforts and actions, and whether this should be done in a staggered manner, for example by discussing reports by pillar (economic, environmental, social or cross-cutting) each year;**

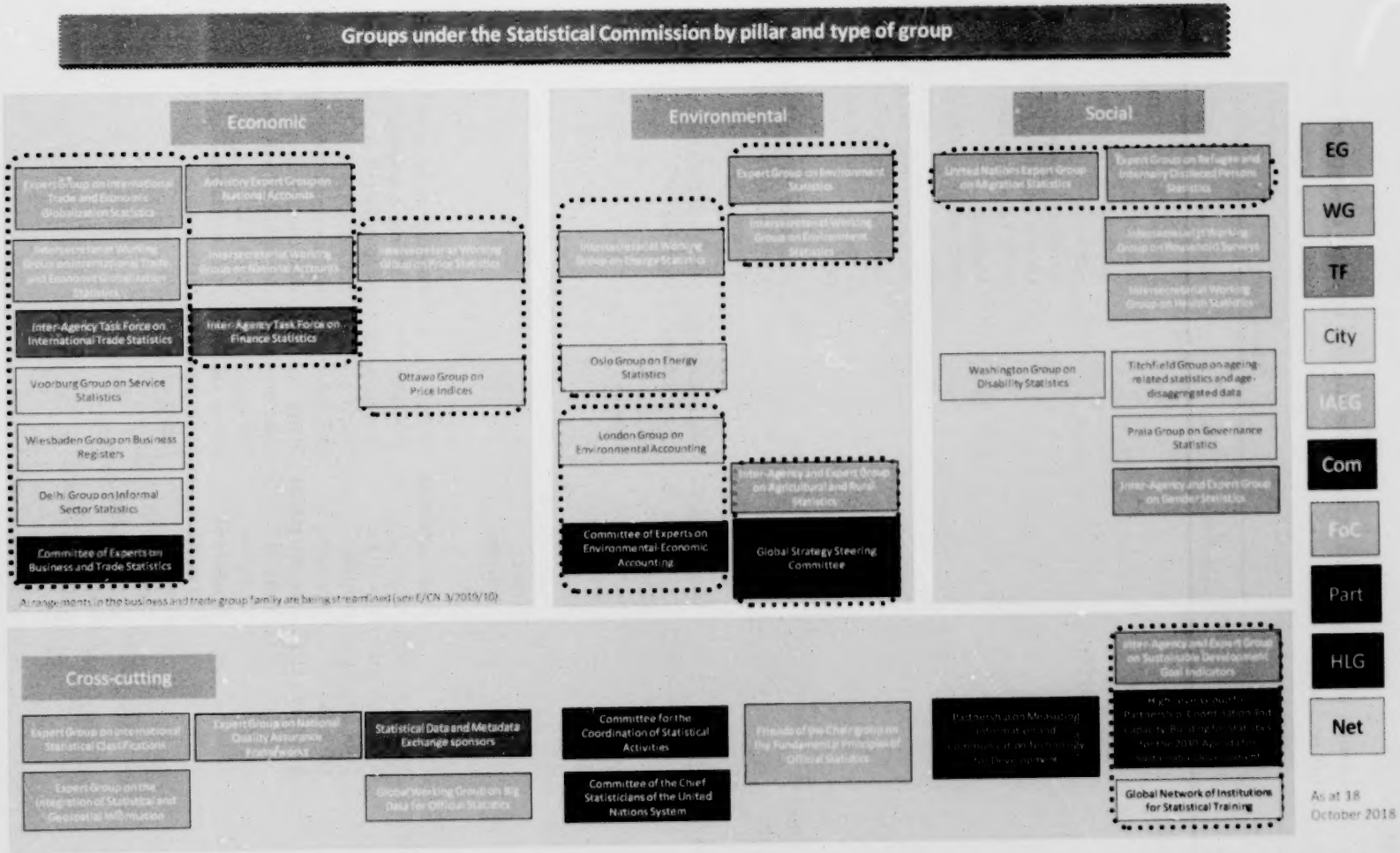
(b) **Whether the Commission should request particular members of the Bureau to provide standing oversight and guidance for each pillar (with support from the Secretariat) with respect to current and potential groups, and, in this context, whether preferred arrangements for families of groups should also be discussed;**

(c) Whether the Commission should establish nomenclature (naming conventions) and guidelines for new and existing groups, based on their nature, expected outcomes and mandate;

(d) Going forward, whether the Commission should explicitly allocate a time frame for each group that it establishes and encourage new and existing groups to work transparently, including by maintaining an updated web page.

Annex I

Graphic presentation of active groups operating under the auspices of the Statistical Commission, 2018


Groups under the Statistical Commission by pillar and type of group
Economic
Expert Group on International Trade and Economic Globalization Statistics
Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts
Intersecretariat Working Group on International Trade and Economic Globalization Statistics
Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts
Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics
Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics
Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance Statistics
Ottawa Group on Price Indices
Voorburg Group on Service Statistics
Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers
Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics
Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics
Arrangements in the business and trade group family are being streamlined (see E/CN.3/2019/10)
Environmental
Expert Group on Environment Statistics
Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics
Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics
Oslo Group on Energy Statistics
London Group on Environmental Accounting
Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics
Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting
Global Strategy Steering Committee
Social
United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics
Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics
Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys
Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics
Washington Group on Disability Statistics
Titchfield Group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data
Praia Group on Governance Statistics
Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics
Cross-cutting
Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications
Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks
Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange sponsors
Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information
Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics
Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities
Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System
Friends of the Chair group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics
Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development
Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators
Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training
EG
WG
TF
City
IAEG
Com
FoC
Part
HLG
Net
As at 18 October 2018

Abbreviations: City, city group; Com, committee; EG, expert group; FoC, friends of the Chair; HLG, high-level group; IAEG, inter-agency expert group; Net, network; Part, partnership; TF, task force; WG, working group.

Annex II

Groups under the Statistical Commission (count) by type of group and technical focus, 2018

	Technical focus			
Type of group	*Capacity development*	*Coordination*	*Data*	*Methodology*
City groups	Washington Group on Disability Statistics (1)			London Group on Environmental Accounting, Washington Group on Disability Statistics, Voorburg Group on Service Statistics, Ottawa Group on Price Indices, Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics, Oslo Group on Energy Statistics, Praia Group on Governance Statistics, Titchfield Group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data, Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers (9)
Friends of the Chair groups				Friends of the Chair group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (1)
Task forces		Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance Statistics, Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics (2)	Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange sponsors (1)	Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange sponsors (1)
Working groups	Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics (1)	Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts, Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys, Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics, Intersecretariat	Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics, Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (2)	Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts, Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics, Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys, Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics, Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics (5)

Type of group	Technical focus			
	Capacity development	*Coordination*	*Data*	*Methodology*
		Working Group on International Trade and Economic Globalization Statistics, Intersecretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics, Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (6)		
Expert groups		Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information (1)		Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information, Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks, Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications, Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics, Expert Group on International Trade and Economic Globalization Statistics, Expert Group on Environment Statistics, United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics (8)
Partnerships				Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technology for Development (1)
Committees		Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, Global Strategy Steering Committee, Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United		Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics, Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (2)

	Technical focus			
Type of group	*Capacity development*	*Coordination*	*Data*	*Methodology*
		Nations System, Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics (5)		
Inter-agency expert groups		Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (1)		Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics, Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics (3)
Other	Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training (1)	High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training (2)		

Note: Owing to the existence of groups with a multi-pronged technical focus, the figures in parentheses above do not add up to the total number of groups.

United Nations E/CN.3/2019/23

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
24 December 2018

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Fiftieth session
5–8 March 2019
Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: demographic statistics

Demographic statistics

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which was prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, presents activities carried out by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat in the area of demographic statistics. It provides a summary of the implementation of the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme during the past year, with a focus on contemporary methods of conducting population and housing censuses, including real-time and conventional editing of census records for the current population and housing census round. It provides information on activities relating to the promotion of the revised set of international statistical standards for civil registration and vital statistics and the development of handbooks on the legal framework and communication for the development of civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems. It also provides information on the collection of demographic statistics through the *Demographic Yearbook* questionnaires and summary information on an expert group meeting on the use of contemporary methodology for the delineation of urban and rural areas. In addition, it provides an update on the development and related activities of the Titchfield Group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data, which was established at the forty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission.

The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2019/1.

18-20926 (E) 150119

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I. Introduction

1. The present report, which was prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, presents activities carried out by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat in the area of demographic statistics.

II. 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme

2. The 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme was approved by the Statistical Commission at its forty-sixth session and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2015/10. The Programme serves as acknowledgement that population and housing censuses are among the main sources of data for effective development planning and objective decision-making, in particular in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Programme is aimed at ensuring that each Member State conducts a population and housing census at least once during the 2015–2024 period and disseminates the resulting census statistics on population and housing in as comprehensive and holistic a manner as possible.

3. In that context, the Division undertook the process of revising and updating the major international statistical standard for population and housing censuses, the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*, and the third revision of that set of recommendations was adopted by the Statistical Commission at its forty-sixth session.

4. Building on those principles and recommendations, as well as on the revised *Handbook on the Management of Population and Housing Censuses*, the completion of which was reported to the Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session, the Division organized and conducted, with the support of the World Bank and the United Nations Population Fund, three workshops on the theme "2020 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses: international standards and contemporary technologies", held in Tbilisi in April 2018; in Colombo in May 2018; and in Kuala Lumpur in June 2018, with the participation of 30 Asian countries and 70 census managers and senior census methodologists.

5. Furthermore, the Division provided direct technical assistance to national statistical authorities in supporting the conduct of their respective population and housing censuses based on internationally agreed standards and methods. Such in-house training was provided to the national statistical authorities in the State of Palestine in December 2017 and Cameroon in November 2018, in line with their specific needs and with regard to the planning and implementation of their respective 2020 rounds of population and housing censuses.

6. Taking into consideration that the 2020 round of population and housing censuses (2015–2024) will be substantially different in terms of the role of contemporary technologies, primarily the use of tablet computers and self-enumeration using the Internet, the Division, in close coordination with the regional commissions of the United Nations and with the support of national statistical offices that used those technologies in their censuses, finalized the initial version of the *Guidelines on the Use of Electronic Data Collection Technologies in Population and Housing Censuses*.[1] The *Guidelines* have been designed as a live online document

[1] Available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/standmeth/handbooks/guideline-edct-census-v1.pdf.

that will be updated with national experiences and further elaborated as they become available throughout the 2020 census round.

7. In January 2019, during the process of completing the methodological framework for the 2020 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, the Division conducted a meeting to review the draft second revision of the *Handbook on Population and Housing Census Editing*. The *Handbook* elaborates on procedures and specifications for conventional census editing after the collection of census data, as well as on real-time editing, in which tablet computers and similar technology are used for data collection.

8. The Division, together with the United Nations Population Fund, the United States Census Bureau and the World Bank, is coordinating activities relating to population and housing censuses through the International Committee on Census Coordination, which meets at least twice a year.

9. The Division will, as in previous rounds, organize workshops to promote the revised principles, recommendations and other methodological materials, targeting all regions. Detailed schedules, subject matter and information on participating countries and partners will be posted regularly on the website of the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme.

III. Implementation of the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3*

10. On the basis of the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3*, endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its forty-fifth session, and *the Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Management, Operation and Maintenance, Revision 1*, whose completion was announced to the Commission at its forty-eighth session, the Division, with the close cooperation and support of the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean of the World Health Organization, designed and conducted regional workshops to introduce and promote the revised set of international standards and the operations of civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems. The workshops were held in Casablanca, Morocco, and Tunis in March 2018, with the participation of 20 countries and 69 statisticians, civil registrars and public health professionals. The workshops introduced a newly developed curriculum intended to provide training to statisticians, civil registrars, public health officers and identity management professionals in the development of a holistic model for ensuring interoperability between the registration of vital events, the production of regular and reliable vital statistics, and identity management systems.

11. The Division conducted, with the close cooperation and support of the non-governmental organization Vital Strategies, an expert group meeting in December 2018 on the draft revision of the *Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of the Legal Framework*, published in 1998, entitled *Guidelines on the Legislative Framework for Civil Registration, Vital Statistics and Identity Management*. A report on the meeting and the finalized *Guidelines* will be available as background documents.

12. The Division is organizing, with the close cooperation and support of the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems, an expert group meeting on the draft revision of the *Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Developing Information, Education and Communication*, published in 1998, entitled *Handbook on Civil Registration, Vital Statistics and Identity Management Systems: Communication for Development*. The revision will

take into consideration contemporary methods and techniques relating to communication and education with regard to the necessity of registering vital events, translating them into comprehensive, regular, small area vital statistics and ensuring a legal identity for all.

13. The Division continues to serve as the secretariat for the Global Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Group and maintains its website, which provides information on the activities of all members of the Group relating to the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics. The Group has elaborated on various projects and programmes carried out by members of the group, ensuring a coordinated approach and the use of international standards and recommendations.

14. In September 2018, at the request of the Deputy Secretary-General, the Division was designated co-chair, together with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund, of the United Nations Legal Identity Expert Group, which brings together 15 entities, including regional commissions. The main objective of the Expert Group is to provide advice and a unified United Nations position with regard to the definition of legal identity in the context of a holistic model for civil registration, vital statistics and identity management.

IV. Collection of statistics through the *Demographic Yearbook* questionnaires

15. The Division collects, compiles and disseminates annually official demographic and social statistics for all countries and areas of the world. The data are collected through a set of annual and census questionnaires dispatched to the national statistical offices. The data collected refer to population distribution and composition by several characteristics, including the population of cities and urban agglomerations, fertility, mortality, nuptiality, annual migration flows, migrant stock according to the population censuses, household characteristics, housing characteristics, economic characteristics and levels of education. The traditional form of dissemination is the *Demographic Yearbook* collection, published annually since 1948.[2]

16. The following overview represents an update of the report submitted to the Statistical Commission at its forty-ninth session (E/CN.3/2018/21) and is focused on the availability of vital statistics collected from the national statistical offices, which is defined as the main data sets available for each vital event published in the *Demographic Yearbook 2017*, the latest published edition.[3] The annex to the present report contains a table indicating the availability of each listed data set in terms of the number of countries or areas that submitted data published in the *Demographic Yearbook 2017* as a percentage of the total number of countries or areas of the world.

17. Broadly speaking, the availability of vital statistics, by topic, is as follows: live births by urban or rural residence, 70 per cent; deaths by urban or rural residence, 68 per cent; live births by age of mother and sex of child, and deaths by age and sex, 62 and 61 per cent, respectively; marriages by urban or rural residence, 57 per cent; marriages by age of groom and by age of bride, 45 per cent; infant deaths by urban or rural residence, 55 per cent; infant deaths by age and sex, 44 per cent; divorces by urban or rural residence, 49 per cent; late fetal deaths by urban or rural residence,

[2] Editions of the *Demographic Yearbook* are available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/products/dyb/index.cshtml. Demographic data, in particular population and housing census data, are published incrementally online to the UNdata portal at http://data.un.org/.

[3] At the time of reporting (December 2018). By the time the present report is submitted to the Statistical Commission, in March 2019, the *Demographic Yearbook 2017* will be available.

38 per cent; live births by age of father, 37 per cent; legally induced abortions, 26 per cent; and legally induced abortions by age of woman, 21 per cent.

18. Some three quarters of the countries or areas of the world have submitted to the United Nations overall statistics on total births and deaths. The share decreases, however, with the introduction of additional variables, such as age, and with respect to other units of vital statistics enumeration, such as fetal deaths.

V. Activities relating to a methodology for the delineation of urban and rural areas

19. In accordance with decision 49/112 (j) of the Statistical Commission (see E/2018/24), the Division undertook activities relating to assessing a methodology for the delineation of urban and rural areas for purposes of international statistical comparison. This particular methodology for devising a harmonized definition of cities and rural areas based on the degree of urbanization and the definition of a functional urban area has been developed by the European Commission, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the World Bank.

20. In December 2017, the Division launched a pilot survey – 15 countries from all regions of the world participated – soliciting input from national statistical authorities regarding the implementation and feasibility of the proposed methodology in their national circumstances. The results were presented at a side event of the forty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission, in March 2018, and the conclusion was reached that further discussion and assessment were necessary.

21. Subsequently, the Division, with the cooperation and full support of the European Commission, conducted an expert group meeting, to be held in New York from 28 to 30 January 2019, on the statistical methodology for delineating cities and rural areas. The conclusions and recommendations of the meeting will be available as background documents. The full report and recommendations with respect to endorsing the methodology for the purpose of ensuring international statistical comparability only – while not affecting or having an impact on national definitions of cities, townships and urban and rural areas – will be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its fifty-first session.

VI. Activities of the Titchfield Group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data

22. At its forty-ninth session, the Statistical Commission, in its decision 49/118 (E/2018/24), established the Titchfield Group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data and endorsed its proposed terms of reference. The Commission encouraged the Titchfield Group to work in close consultation with other existing mechanisms on data disaggregation.

23. During the past year, with the Office of National Statistics of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland at the lead, the Titchfield Group has developed the terms of reference for its Steering Group. As part of that work, the role of the Steering Group and of the national statistical office taking the lead in tackling specific areas of work have been developed. The main areas of work are focused on an assessment of the current evidence; horizon scanning to anticipate future needs; a conceptual and analytical framework; ensuring alignment with the Sustainable

Development Goals and with other groups; standardization and harmonization; and a platform for sharing information.

24. Encouraging more active participation from the national statistical offices, including by leading the areas of work, is of particular importance in terms of achieving the goals of the Titchfield Group. Consequently, a strategy has been developed to promote the Group at international events relating to disaggregation and ageing, such as at the meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, held in Sweden from 5 to 8 November 2018, and the South-South Conference on Demography and Population Ageing meeting, held in Malaysia on 4 and 5 December 2018.

25. The first formal technical meeting of the Titchfield Group was held in Chichester, United Kingdom, on 26 and 27 June 2018. The main objectives of the meeting were to identify and refine the areas of work, deliverables and scope of work. More than 60 representatives of 30 national statistical offices and 17 other institutions, including civil society, academia and United Nations entities, attended the meeting.[4]

26. The second technical meeting of the Titchfield Group is scheduled for June 2019. The national statistics office of the Republic of Korea, Statistics Korea, has offered to host the meeting. The main objectives of the meeting will be finalized by the Steering Group in early 2019; they are likely to include a review of progress thus far, the sharing of case study examples of where data on older ages have been improved and the further refinement of deliverables for the second and third years.

27. The paper prepared by the Office of National Statistics of the United Kingdom on the Titchfield Group is available as a background document.

[4] See https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/events/first-official-meeting-of-the-titchfield-city-group-on-ageing-and-age-disaggregated-data.

Annex

Availability of vital statistics

	Countries or areas	
	Number	*Percentage*
Fertility		
Live births by urban or rural residence	166	70
Live births by age of mother and sex of child	148	62
Live births by age of father	87	37
Fetal mortality		
Late fetal deaths by urban or rural residence	91	38
Legally induced abortions	62	26
Legally induced abortions by age of woman	51	21
Infant mortality		
Infant deaths by urban or rural residence	130	55
Infant deaths by age and sex	105	44
General mortality		
Deaths by urban or rural residence	163	68
Deaths by age and sex	146	61
Nuptiality and divorce		
Marriages by urban or rural residence	135	57
Marriages by age of groom and by age of bride	108	45
Divorces by urban or rural residence	116	49

Source: *Demographic Yearbook 2017*.

United Nations E/CN.3/2019/24

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 December 2018

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Fiftieth session
5–8 March 2019
Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: health statistics

Report of the World Health Organization outlining current work on health statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the World Health Organization, which outlines current work on health statistics in relation to the global monitoring of the health and health-related Sustainable Development Goals, the International Classification of Diseases and its normative work. The report also includes an update on the work being carried out to strengthen country health information systems.

The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2019/1.

18-21947 (E) 100119

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Report of the World Health Organization on health statistics

I. General update on health statistical work

1. Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, and basing its work on the core 100 health indicators and on its commitment to Member States with regard to reporting on health-related Goals, the World Health Organization (WHO) has published an annual flagship report entitled *World Health Statistics*, which contains global, regional and country health estimates based on data reported by Member States. The latest report[1] is focused on various health-related Goals, including reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, environmental risks, health risks and disease outbreaks.

2. The six regional offices of WHO also published region-specific highlights on the Goals and on regional and topical health issues, including those relating to environmental health.

3. The data and statistics used and produced by WHO follow the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics,[2] in which the Commission highlighted the importance of official statistics in addressing the information needs of a country and elaborated on the required quality, utilization and dissemination of official statistics. Official health statistics must conform to the Fundamental Principles. According to Principle 5, which specifically addresses sources of official statistics, data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source most appropriate to their specific needs, taking into consideration quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.

4. Measurements of health indicators are rarely available for every population and period of interest, and available data may not be comparable. The Guidelines for Accurate and Transparent Health Estimates Reporting (GATHER)[3] define best reporting practices for studies aimed at calculating health estimates for multiple populations (in time or space), using multiple information sources. Health estimates that fall within the scope of GATHER include all quantitative global, regional, national and subnational population-level estimates of health indicators, including health status, incidence and prevalence of diseases, injuries and disability and functioning, and indicators of health determinants, including health behaviours and health exposures. GATHER comprises a checklist of 18 items that are essential for best reporting practice.

5. With the enormous amount of work at hand for the health sector, led by WHO, the Organization will need all the support it can get from the global community, including the statistical community, with the national statistical offices at the centre. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics, formed in 2004, has drawn up a framework for health statistics, which contains the following objectives:

(a) Clarify the content of health statistics (for example, levels and causes of death and morbidity; health status in terms of functioning, risk factors and health determinants; health-care service availability, quality and utilization; and health-care expenditures) and the relationship between content and the most common sources of

[1] World Health Organization (WHO), *World Health Statistics 2018: Monitoring Health for the Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva, 2018).

[2] General Assembly resolution 68/261.

[3] Available at http://gather-statement.org.

data on health (civil registration; population and institutional surveys; disease surveillance and health care; and administrative records);

(b) Reflect the hierarchical nature of information within content areas and highlight the pressing need for general measures of population health, as well as measures that relate specifically to biomedically defined physiological conditions and determinants of those conditions;

(c) Make it possible to identify an overall and coherent data-collection system that would provide information on a range of topics so that piecemeal or silo statistical systems can be eliminated;

(d) Facilitate the identification of areas where innovative approaches to data collection are needed;

(e) Facilitate the institutionalization of partnerships among the national statistical offices, ministries of health and other constituencies within countries.

6. WHO, as the leading agency for health statistics, needs to consult with relevant experts, including those at the national level, to move the work forward.

II. Monitoring a new impact framework

7. At the seventy-first session of the World Health Assembly, held in May 2018, Member States approved the Organization's thirteenth general programme of work for 2019–2023 and welcomed its ambitious vision, as expressed by the aspirational "triple billion" targets. The WHO impact framework of the thirteenth general programme of work is aimed at ensuring that WHO programmes have a measurable impact on people at the country level. It therefore has the potential to transform the way WHO works by anchoring its commitments in measurable results, thereby increasing the likelihood that the triple billion targets will be met. The impact framework guides the strategic implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially but not limited to Goal 3 on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages, through a life course approach. The impact framework is aimed at tracking the joint efforts of the WHO secretariat, Member States and partners to achieve the targets of the thirteenth general programme of work and the Sustainable Development Goals.

8. The impact framework is a three-layer measurement system: (a) an overarching and comparable measure of progress reported by the healthy life expectancy indicator connecting the triple billion targets; (b) the triple billion targets, which are focused on universal health coverage, health emergencies and healthier populations; and (c) 46 programmatic targets and related indicators.

9. The triple billion targets are: 1 billion more people benefiting from universal health coverage; 1 billion more people better protected from health emergencies; and 1 billion more people enjoying better health and well-being. These targets will be met primarily through multisectoral policy, advocacy and regulation. Each of the triple billion targets will be measured using composite indices, namely, a universal health coverage index, a health emergency protection index and a healthier population index, which are described in sections A to C below.

A. Universal health coverage index

10. A combined measure of service coverage and related financial hardship will be used to monitor progress towards the targets of the thirteenth general programme of work. The combined measure is defined as the proportion of a population with service

coverage and not experiencing financial hardship due to large spending on health in a country in a given year. In line with Sustainable Development Goal indicator 3 (8) (1), the principle of tracer indicators is used to assess service coverage. Financial risk protection will be measured by means of the fraction of households receiving health care and not facing large spending on health in a given year (see indicator 3 (8) (2)). Equity in universal health coverage will be addressed by examining the age group (life course) and distribution by sex of people included in the baseline data and examining increases in universal health coverage.

11. In order to better capture the ambition of target 3 (8) on achieving universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all, there is a need to develop an improved methodology to embed the quality aspects of service coverage outlined in indicator 3 (8) (1), coverage of essential health services (defined as the average coverage of essential services based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases and service capacity and access, among the general and the most disadvantaged population). Responding to the needs for effective programmes that deliver quality health services, WHO is working with Member States, partners and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to ensure that health statistics for the Goals capture the true aspirations of the Member States and the targets they set to transform our world. The improvements proposed will address the quality criterion of the target by measuring effective coverage and the health gains delivered by essential services. The revised methodology was submitted to the Group for its review and comments in December 2018. A virtual meeting of the Group is scheduled for January 2019 to discuss the revised methodology.

B. Health emergency protection index

12. The target of having 1 billion more people better protected from health emergencies is consistent with Sustainable Development Goal target 3 (d) and indicator 3 (d) (1) and the 2016 report of the Review Committee on the Role of the International Health Regulations (2005) in the Ebola Outbreak and Response. Progress towards the target will be measured using a health emergencies protection index consisting of three tracer indicators (or sub-indices) that capture activities to prepare for, to prevent and to detect and respond to health emergencies.

C. Healthier population index

13. The relevant 1 billion target focuses on the impact of multisectoral interventions influenced by policy, advocacy and regulatory approaches stewarded by the health sector. The current 19 priority indicators are based on the decreased burden of disease achieved by addressing various social, environmental and behavioural risks through policy, advocacy and regulatory interventions.

D. Health programme targets and indicators

14. A total of 46 programmatic targets and related indicators serve as a flexible toolkit for measuring WHO programme performance and for tracking and accelerating progress toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Countries will use these indicators to track progress on their selected priorities;

therefore, not every country will track every indicator for the purposes of monitoring performance with regard to the thirteenth general programme of work.

15. A total of 29 targets align with the Sustainable Development Goals; 10 align with World Health Assembly resolutions, action plans and/or frameworks; 5 align with both the Sustainable Development Goals and World Health Assembly resolutions, action plans and/or frameworks; and 2 are entirely new and address emerging public health priorities, namely, antimicrobial resistance and reducing mortality from climate-sensitive diseases. The table below provides a summary of alignments with the WHO impact framework targets.

Target alignment	*Number of targets*
Sustainable Development Goals	29
World Health Assembly resolutions/action plans/frameworks	10
Sustainable Development Goals and World Health Assembly resolutions/ action plans/frameworks	5
Subtotal	**44**
New targets (antimicrobial resistance and mortality from climate-sensitive diseases)	2
Total	**46**

III. Monitoring the health and health-related Sustainable Development Goals

16. WHO provided substantial inputs into the work done by the Commission and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. WHO is fully engaged in the work and discussions of the Group by providing proposals for the most suitable indicators, metadata for the selected indicators and data for the yearly report on the Goals prepared by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on behalf of the United Nations system.

17. The WHO impact framework is also aligned with the global action plan for healthy lives and well-being for all,[4] a historical commitment to unite for health, requested by the Chancellor Germany, the President of Ghana and the Prime Minister of Norway, with support from the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The shared response outlines a framework and a set of milestones for 2023, by aligning efforts, accelerating progress and enhancing accountability with regard to 50 health-related targets across 14 Sustainable Development Goals.

18. Monitoring the health sector status, progress and trends and the health-related Goals presents major challenges to most countries. Statistical capacity with regard to health is still weak in many countries. This is further strained by the high demand for data disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics relevant in national contexts, in order to address the needs of the poor, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged. All WHO programmes are working tirelessly to provide technical support to countries to help them address their Sustainable Development Goal monitoring needs. Strengthened coordination and collaboration between the health sector, such as the ministries of health, and the national statistical offices is key to having a strengthened national statistical system for health. In addition, institutional capacity for data collection, processing, analysis, use and dissemination and effective reporting is

[4] Available at www.who.int/sdg/global-action-plan.

inadequate among the relevant country institutions. The health sector and WHO will play a decisive role in that endeavour.

19. The Health Data Collaborative was launched during the forty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission, in response to the assessment that investments in strengthening national health information systems needed to become more efficient to meet the demands relating to monitoring the health and health-related Sustainable Development Goals and to contribute to the sustainable development of national statistical systems.

20. The mission of the Health Data Collaborative is to maximize and align investments in national health information systems and to ensure that harmonized approaches and methods for data collection and analysis are conducted by stakeholders and partners. The Collaborative draws on the five-point call to action on health measurement and accountability to establish a harmonized approach for adoption by countries, partners and stakeholders who are committed to: (a) improving the efficiency and alignment of technical and financial investments in national health information systems; and (b) increasing the impact of global public goods through more harmonization and coherence of tools, methods and approaches.[5]

IV. New technical package for strengthening country health data systems

21. In support of strengthened country data systems and capacities to monitor the health and health-related Sustainable Development Goals, WHO, in collaboration with the Health Data Collaborative partners, has developed a new technical package for health data, known as SCORE (survey, count, optimize, review, enable). The package is designed to enable countries:

(a) To rapidly identify critical gaps and needs in country data systems and capacities required for monitoring the health Goals;

(b) To focus investments on priority interventions that, together, can have a substantial impact on the generation, quality, analysis, use and dissemination of health-related data;

(c) To access recommended or best practice actions, tools and standards for strengthening the different components of health information systems and statistical capacities.

22. A first global report of the state of country health information systems and their capacities for monitoring the health Goals will be published in 2019. That report will provide an important opportunity to identify priority actions and needs, guide investments and serve as a benchmark for monitoring progress in performance over time.

V. Classifications

23. Country health statistics are founded on the bedrock of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD). The process for the eleventh revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) is coming to an end. In June 2018, WHO released a version in preparation for its implementation. ICD-11 will be submitted to the Executive Board for its consideration in January 2019 and to the World Health Assembly in May 2019. The

[5] Health Data Collaborative, "Health Data Collaborative progress report 2016–2018".

goals of the review, namely, to simplify the use of ICD and incorporate scientific updates, clinical utility at all levels of care and suitability for digital health using ontologies, have been achieved. ICD-11 will be linked to the International Nonproprietary Names database for pharmaceutical substances, the Anatomical Therapeutic Chemical classification system and the WHO nomenclature of medical devices. A section on functioning, in line with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), containing elements of annex 9 of ICF, the WHO disability assessment schedule and the brief version of the model disability survey, allows users to calculate functioning scores in the clinical context. ICD-11 and all accompanying materials are available at https://icd.who.int.

24. A classification for health interventions will undergo systematic testing in 2019. It includes medical, functioning, nursing and public health interventions.

25. An updated version of ICF is currently being prepared for publication.

VI. A new survey programme

26. Given the increasing need for dedicated health surveys and the acute need for multiple indicator-based surveys for monitoring the health Sustainable Development Goals, and building on its past experiences conducting the World Health Survey (2002–2004) and the WHO study on global ageing and adult health, WHO is holding discussions with Member States to start a new multi-topic, multimode and multiplatform survey programme, based on the needs identified by countries, prioritization of the indicators and a study on sustainable financing and implementation of these surveys. The World Health Examination Survey has already been piloted in some countries. WHO is now finalizing the methodology and questionnaires for field testing and scaled implementation. In that exercise, WHO will work with other United Nations agencies, including the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys, as well as technical experts, national statistics offices and other stakeholders.

VII. Implementation of the model disability survey

27. WHO is currently supporting Member States in the collection of data on disability and functioning at the population level using the model disability survey,[6] a general population household survey.

28. The model disability survey was developed by WHO and the World Bank in collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, as recommended in the 2013 WHO report on disability[7] and in the WHO global disability action plan for the period 2014–2021,[8] adopted by 194 Member States at the sixty-seventh session of the World Health Assembly, held in 2014. The Survey is grounded in ICF and designed to identify and address barriers and unmet needs, formulate policies and evidence-based national disability strategies and help to assess the progress of States parties with regard to their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

29. Two versions of the survey are currently available: a standalone version that is ideal for a dedicated survey on disability and a brief version that could be used as a module to be integrated into existing household surveys.

30. The model disability survey has already been implemented as a dedicated nationwide disability survey in Chile, Costa Rica, Qatar, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

[6] Available at www.who.int/disabilities/data/mds/en/.

[7] WHO, document A66/12.

[8] WHO, *WHO Global Disability Action Plan 2014–2021: Better Health for All People with Disability* (Geneva, 2015).

The Survey was also implemented regionally in Cameroon (Adamaoua), Pakistan (Balochistan) and the United Arabic Emirates (Dubai). The brief version of the survey will be implemented in 2018 in the context of the Gallup poll in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, India and Tajikistan. The results of the survey were used in the United Nations flagship report on disability and development, released in 2018.[9]

VIII. Monitoring health inequalities

31. The concept of leaving no one behind is foundational to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. "Serving the vulnerable" is a cornerstone of the thirteenth WHO general programme of work and its impact framework. WHO therefore needs a special focus on monitoring health inequalities, using data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant characteristics to identify disadvantaged population subgroups to inform equity-oriented health policies, programmes and practices.

32. The WHO has developed several tools and resources for monitoring health inequalities, including the Health Equity Monitor,[10] a platform that makes available information and resources on health inequality monitoring and includes a large database of data disaggregated by relevant characteristics, and the Health Equity Assessment Toolkit (HEAT),[11] a software application that facilitates the assessment of national health inequalities and is available in two editions: HEAT, the built-in database edition, and HEAT Plus, the upload database edition.

33. To disseminate evidence on health inequalities, WHO has published several reports on the global state of inequality, including on reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health[12] and on childhood immunization,[13] and has reported inequalities in its annual *World Health Statistics* and universal health coverage global monitoring reports.

34. Capacity-building activities for national health inequality monitoring among Member States have included the provision of training workshops and the development of training resources.[14] WHO has also presented a comprehensive assessment of health inequalities within a given country.[15]

IX. Conclusion

35. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

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[9] Department for Economic and Social Affairs, *United Nations Flagship Report on Disability and Development 2018: Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with Persons with Disabilities*, 3 December 2018.

[10] Available at www.who.int/gho/health_equity/en/.

[11] Available at www.who.int/gho/health_equity/assessment_toolkit/en/.

[12] WHO, *State of Inequality: Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health – Interactive Visualization of Health Data* (Geneva, 2015).

[13] WHO, *State of Inequality: Childhood Immunization – Interactive Visualization of Health Data (Geneva, 2016)*; and *Explorations of Inequality: Childhood Immunization – Interactive Visualization of Health Data* (Geneva, 2018).

[14] WHO, *Handbook on Health Inequality Monitoring with a Special Focus on Low- and Middle-Income Countries* (Geneva, 2013) and other tools available at www.who.int/gho/health_equity/handbook/en/; and *National Health Inequality Monitoring: a Step-by-Step Manual* (Geneva, 2017).

[15] See, for example, WHO, *State of Health Inequality: Indonesia – Interactive Visualization of Health Data* (Geneva, 2017).

United Nations E/CN.3/2019/25

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 December 2018

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Fiftieth session
5–8 March 2019
Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: household surveys

Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys. It provides a summary of the recent activities undertaken by the Working Group, including refocusing its work towards cross-cutting issues and the mapping of global Sustainable Development Goal indicators that can be derived from household surveys. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of the progress made and of the future direction of the work.

* E/CN.3/2019/1.

18-20955 (E) 040119

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Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys

I. Introduction

1. In 2015, the Statistical Commission, in its decision 46/105, endorsed the establishment of an intersecretariat working group on household surveys,[1] under the aegis of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, to foster the coordination and harmonization of household survey activities. The Commission also requested the development of the terms of reference of the Working Group under the guidance of the Bureau of the Commission, to be presented to the Commission at its forty-seventh session. The current members of the Working Group are listed in the annex to the present report.

2. The progress made by the Working Group was set out in the report of the Secretary-General and the report of the Working Group on the subject that were submitted to the Commission at its forty-eighth and forty-ninth sessions (E/CN.3/2017/20 and E/CN.3/2018/7, respectively). Subsequently, in its decision 49/106, the Commission agreed that the work to map Sustainable Development Goal indicators that could be derived from household surveys should continue and encouraged the Working Group to provide guidance on methodological areas and update the existing methodological guidance on household surveys with a cross-cutting focus, in particular on sampling, disaggregation and multimode data collection.

3. The present report provides information on progress made by the Working Group since the previous session of the Commission. The Working Group has discussed how to work more on cross-cutting issues and established new task forces. It has also advanced the work on the mapping of global Goal indicators that can be derived from household surveys, including for data disaggregation. A paper presenting key findings, as well as advantages and challenges with regard to using household surveys, will be before the Commission as a background document, together with the updated mapping exercise.

II. Progress of work

4. The fourth and fifth meetings of the management group of the Working Group were held on 7 March 2018 in New York and 5 November 2018 in Stockholm, respectively. The participants discussed two main topics: the future direction of work and strengthening the secretariat of the Working Group with a full-time position.

5. The technical working group held its fourth meeting, in Vienna on 27 and 28 September 2018. The participants discussed how to move the work towards more cross-cutting issues, advocacy for the work and funding to strengthen the secretariat of the Working Group and methodological developments. The Working Group also organized a panel discussion at the second United Nations World Data Forum, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in October 2018, entitled "Innovate or perish! Household surveys in a changing landscape data land". The panel presented innovative developments relating to household survey design and implementation, with integration as the central theme. The session was well attended and positive feedback was received.

[1] Further information is available at the website of the Working Group (https://unstats.un.org/iswghs).

6. At the forty-ninth session of the Commission, the Working Group presented a mapping exercise showing the entire range of global Goal indicators for which data could be derived from household surveys. The goal was to develop a shared vision of how household survey-based data for Goal indicators could be efficiently delivered by countries and, in parallel, to identify activities required of the member agencies to support countries in this task. A total of 77 indicators, distributed widely across the Goals, were identified as being sourced (either currently or potentially) from household surveys. As recommended by the Commission, work in this regard has continued. First, an additional consideration has been added to the mapping to show possible ways of disaggregating data derived from household surveys in order to fulfil the ambition, set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, of leaving no one behind. Second, a paper currently under development will provide an outline of the key findings of the mapping exercise, with emphasis laid on the importance of household surveys for Goal monitoring, including at the subnational level. Also included will be key methodological and technical innovations for household surveys, as well as challenges faced. Both documents will be before the Commission as background documents.

7. In 2017, five task forces were established within the Working Group. Progress has been made in their work.[2] While work remains to be done on some of the topics that the task forces covered, it was decided that the Working Group's activities should move away from sectoral issues and focus on more cross-cutting activities, in the light of the request by the Commission, including with regard to addressing the needs for data disaggregation. More information about this work will be posted on the web page of the Working Group.

8. Regarding updating the manual entitled *Designing Household Survey Samples: Practical Guidelines*, the Working Group has decided to complement existing guidelines with new areas on sampling rather than updating the entire manual. The content of the guidelines remains relevant. Updates may include sample frame issues, sampling strategies to leave no one behind and new technologies used for sampling, taking into account specific country and regional contexts.

9. The Working Group has in the past year been working to secure funds to strengthen technical coordination, methodological validation and standard-setting, and country consultation and advocacy. Its member agencies have agreed to contribute funds to allow the recruitment of a full-time coordinator. Once that person has been hired, the Working Group will look to raise funds to advance other elements of its work.

10. The Working Group discussed the possibility of organizing an international conference on household surveys. To limit travel expenses and save resources, it was agreed to organize a full-day event in conjunction with other major events at which statisticians and their partners meet.

11. The Working Group's member agencies will continue to support countries in conducting household surveys.

III. Conclusion

12. **The Commission is invited to take note of the progress made and of the future direction of the work.**

[2] A summary of the work can be found on the Group's webpage at https://unstats.un.org/ISWGHS.

Annex

Membership of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

International Labour Organization

Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat

United Nations Children's Fund

United Nations Development Programme

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

World Bank

World Health Organization

The Statistics Division serves as the secretariat of the Working Group.

United Nations E/CN.3/2019/26

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 December 2018

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Fiftieth session
5–8 March 2019
Item 4 (d) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: price indices

Report of the Ottawa Group on Price Indices

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Ottawa Group on Price Indices, which is being submitted to the Statistical Commission for its information. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2019/1.

18-21457 (E) 040119

Please recycle

I. Purpose and organization of the Ottawa Group on Price Indices

1. The International Working Group on Price Indices, known as the "Ottawa Group on Price Indices", was formed in 1994 to provide a forum for specialist academics and practitioners to share their experiences and knowledge and discuss research on crucial problems relating to the measurement of price change. While theoretical issues are covered in the discussions, the Group focuses primarily on applied research, in particular, but not exclusively, in the area of consumer price indices. The Group examines the advantages and disadvantages of concepts, methods and procedures in the context of realistic operational environments, supported by specific examples whenever possible. Participants are specialists and practitioners who work for or advise statistical agencies in countries or international organizations. The Group meets every other year, alternating with the meetings of the Group of Experts on Consumer Price Indices, which are jointly organized by the Economic Commission for Europe and the International Labour Organization.

2. The Ottawa Group has a steering committee that ensures the continuity and evolution of the Group's activities. The Group coordinates with other international activities on price statistics, such as the meetings of the Group of Experts on Consumer Price Indices and the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics. The membership of the committee is reviewed periodically at each meeting of the Ottawa Group to ensure that it has a representative cross section of experts, a commitment to diversity (e.g. sex, age and geographical spread) and a sustainable future in relation to succession planning. The committee currently comprises representatives of national statistical offices, academics and other experts in the field of price statistics, a representative of the organizing committee for the Group of Experts on Consumer Price Indices, a representative of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics and representatives of the agencies that have recently hosted or will host meetings of the Ottawa Group. The representative of the Australian Bureau of Statistics currently serves as Executive Secretary of the Group.

3. The meetings of the Ottawa Group are divided into sessions, each devoted to one clearly defined topic with a designated moderator who is responsible for producing a summary of discussions. The summary includes the Group's recommendations, when a clear consensus emerges from the discussion, or, when this is not the case, a summary of the varying opinions, with balanced commentary.

4. Poster sessions, which involve the presentation and discussion of topics in smaller groups, continue to be a feature of the Group's meetings. This innovation is seen as an important development that facilitates knowledge-sharing in a less formal environment. Participants note that this continues to be a positive element of the Group's meetings.

5. The host agency provides facilities and administrative support for the meetings.

6. Copies of the proceedings of each meeting and information about the Group are available from the Group's website (www.ottawagroup.org). The steering committee may also decide to edit and periodically release compendiums on selected topics through the website. The Executive Secretary is responsible for maintaining the website.

7. The Group has a strong emphasis on encouraging organizations around the world to host and attend its meetings to facilitate regional representation and participation, especially from the host country and region. Regional representation allows countries with less developed statistical systems the opportunity to interact and learn from more statistically developed countries, allowing them to build upon

and further strengthen the statistical systems in their region. The Group's meetings have representation from countries in North and South America, Western and Eastern Europe, Asia and the Pacific and Africa.

II. Meetings

8. The Group benefits from the active participation of leading academics and practitioners in the area of price statistics who regularly contribute to the meetings. Various topics have been discussed by the Group, including quality change, hedonics, index formulae, sampling, bias and cost-of-living indices. The Group's most recent achievements relate to the development and empirical research of price index methods to compile the consumer price index using alternative data such as scanner data and big data. The Group has contributed to the development of the *Consumer Price Index Manual: Theory and Practice* (2004).[1] Since an update of the manual was launched in 2015, draft outlines of updates have been presented to the Group for consultation.

9. Developments in the use of big data to compile price indices are an example of the strengths of the Group. The Group brings together academic specialists in the area of price measurement with practitioners from the statistical agencies that actually compile indices. Both groups learn from each other, allowing progress to be made in both the academic and practitioner communities. This has been most noticeable at the recent Group meeting, where developments and innovative ideas led to new approaches being developed in the area of compiling consumer price indices using alternative data.

Most recent meeting

10. Since the submission of the previous report (E/CN.3/2016/29), the Group has met once, in May 2017 in Eltville, Germany. The meeting, hosted by the central bank of Germany, was attended by more than 100 participants from 30 statistical institutes, 10 central banks, 25 international organizations and a number of leading academics and organizations.

11. Fundamental challenges in price measurement remained the focus of the meeting. The Group considered such topics as index theory and practice; house price indices; hedonic methods; property price statistics; commercial property prices; challenges of big data; multilateral index methods; issues with new data sources; and implementing scanner data. Discussions focused on the theoretical and methodological considerations of each topic and the practical implementation of the theory and methods in the context of national statistical agencies. In total, 30 papers were presented for discussion, 2 papers were submitted as room documents and 24 papers were presented as dedicated posters. The papers were well received by participants and discussions focused on challenges, concepts, methods and compilation procedures for price indices.

12. As a general theme, the meeting was focused on the use of alternative data sources and the challenges that those data present to national statistical organizations, practitioners and academics. Alternative data such as web-scraped data, transaction data, big data and administrative data pose challenges to traditional index compilation procedures and methodologies. The Group focuses on taking forward state-of-the-art ideas, and the meeting participants presented practical and theoretically based ways to overcome those challenges. Those new innovative ideas, especially in the field of compiling indices using transaction data, web-scraped data and big data, have led to a new dedicated chapter being included in the update of the *Consumer Price Index*

[1] Available at www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/guides/cpi/index.htm#manual.

Manual: Theory and Practice, which will guide practitioners by discussing methodology on how alternative data can be practically implemented in the compilation of consumer price indices. The full report of the meeting provides a summary of the key points that emerged from each session of the meeting and feedback from participants. It is available as a background document and on the Group's website.

Next meeting

13. The next meeting of the Group will be hosted by the Fundação Getulio Vargas and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 8 to 10 May 2019. There will be a call for papers and discussions on:

(a) New data sources for the compilation of price indices (scanner/transaction data; web-scraped data);

(b) Compiling house price indices (data sources; methodological and conceptual challenges);

(c) Index number formulae;

(d) Price statistics that meet multiple user needs;

(e) Quality adjustment (focus on high-attrition products and approaches used by price statisticians to address these challenges);

(f) Pricing seasonal products (approaches used by price statisticians to address the challenges);

(g) Measuring the digital economy (incomplete adjustment for quality change owing to treatment of new, and typically improved, varieties of existing digital products; treatment of new digital products that replace existing non-digital products);

(h) Other topics (challenging areas of measurement, such as services and free (zero-price) products or services).

14. The website for the meeting can be found at http://eventos.fgv.br/en/OttawaGroup-2019.

15. The Group's steering committee consults members of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics and organizers of the Group of Experts on Consumer Prices Indices to ensure the appropriate coordination of meeting agendas.

III. Contact point

16. The contact point for the Ottawa Group is:

Andrew Tomadini, a/g Program Manager
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Australian Bureau of Statistics
Locked Bag 10, Belconnen ACT 2616
Australia
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IV. Conclusion

17. **The Commission is invited to take note of the report.**

18-21457

United Nations E/CN.3/2019/27

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 December 2018

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Fiftieth session
5–8 March 2019
Item 4 (e) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: big data for official statistics

Report of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics. In the present report, the Global Working Group responds to the requests made by the Statistical Commission at its last session, in particular to make products and services available to the global statistical community on the United Nations Global Platform of trusted data, methods and learning for official statistics, by addressing concerns on privacy and confidentiality and by providing further details on the business model of the Global Platform. The Global Platform is a research and development environment for sharing and testing trusted methods, trusted data and trusted training materials, and offers technology infrastructure and services for official statistics working in collaboration with the private sector, academia and civil society. Furthermore, the various task teams of the Global Working Group (on earth observations, mobile phones, social media and scanner data, and privacy-preserving techniques) conducted training workshops, prepared handbooks and collaborated on innovative projects. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2019/1.

18-21303 (E) 070119

Please recycle

Report of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics

I. Introduction

1. The Statistical Commission created the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics at its forty-fifth session, in 2014. In accordance with its terms of reference (see E/CN.3/2015/4) and decision 46/101 of the Statistical Commission (see E/2015/24-E/CN.3/2015/40), the Global Working Group provides strategic vision, direction and the coordination of a global programme on big data for official statistics, including for the compilation of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. In its decision 49/107 (see E/2018/24-E/CN.3/2018/37), the Statistical Commission reaffirmed that the use of big data and other new data sources was essential for the modernization of national statistical institutions so that they remain relevant in a fast-moving data landscape and highlighted the opportunity for big data to fill gaps, make statistical operations more cost effective, enable the replacement of surveys and provide more granularities in outputs. The Commission endorsed the proposal of the Global Working Group to further develop a global platform as a collaborative research and development environment for trusted data, trusted methods and trusted learning, reiterated the need to present the business case for the platform, encouraged the Global Working Group to build on the success achieved thus far by delivering practical products and services for the global statistical system to support the production of statistics and indicators, including the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, and emphasized the need to carefully address societal challenges of trust, ethics, privacy, confidentiality and security of data.

3. Section II of the present report highlights the annual meeting of the Global Working Group and its Open Day, which were held in Dubai on 21 October 2018. The Open Day offered sessions on the Global Platform of trusted data, methods and learning for official statistics and the work of the various Global Working Group task teams.[1] Section III provides some more information on the Global Platform and the achievements of those task teams, including capacity-building activities, while Section IV outlines the next steps to be taken by the Global Working Group to advance its work programme.

II. Global Working Group annual meeting and Open Day

4. Less time was allocated to the fifth annual meeting of the Global Working Group than at previous occasions because it was held on the same day as the Open Day on the Global Platform. The annual meeting nevertheless covered the following topics: the organization of the fifth International Conference on Big Data, which is scheduled to be held in Kigali in the spring of 2019; the progress made on the Global Platform; the data management issues to be handled by the Global Working Group, especially in relation to the management of the Global Platform; a brief overview of the achievements of the Global Working Group task teams; and the preparation of the Global Working Group report to the Statistical Commission.

5. In previous years, the Global Working Group held its annual meeting as a full two-day meeting, just ahead of its international conference on big data, as was the case in Beijing (2014), Abu Dhabi (2015), Dublin (2016) and, most recently, in Bogotá

[1] A report of the meeting can be found on the Global Working Group website. Available at https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/.

(2017). Reports of those meetings, as well as reports and documents of the meetings of the Bureau of the Global Working Group, can now be found on the website of the Global Working Group.[2] Originally, the fifth annual meeting of the Global Working Group was scheduled to precede the fifth International Conference on Big Data, which, according to the traditional schedule, would have been held in the fall of 2018. Once the second United Nations World Data Forum was announced to be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, at the end of October 2018, however, the Bureau decided that the timing of International Conference would move to the spring, beginning with Kigali in 2019. At the same time, however, the annual meeting of the Global Working Group still needed to be held in order to avoid having a 12-month period without a physical meeting of the full membership and was therefore exceptionally organized the day before the start of the United Nations World Data Forum.

6. The two main points of attention for the Global Working Group are the Global Platform and the corresponding data management issues. The Global Platform has evolved from a concept of the Global Working Group into a reality, with delivery of data, methods and learning. In this regard, the Global Working Group needs to more precisely define and agree on the concepts of its four basic pillars: trusted data, trusted methods, trusted partners and trusted learning. This implies agreement on the ownership of and access to the various large data sets on the Global Platform, whether data and algorithms need to be "open" and how software, services and tools will be "Platform independent". These questions have a direct bearing on the business model for the Global Platform. The Global Working Group decided that a paper on the business model and on data management would be developed in close cooperation with, respectively, the Office for the National Statistics of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Statistics Canada.

7. The Open Day on the Global Platform was organized by the Global Working Group and hosted by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority of the United Arab Emirates. The programme of the Open Day consisted of a demonstration of the Global Platform, followed by sessions on agricultural crop and land cover statistics (using satellite data), measuring human mobility (using mobile phone data), measuring price fluctuations (using scanner data) and privacy-preserving techniques.[3]

8. The Global Platform is open for collaboration on data projects of the global statistical community. It holds an increasing number of data sets, such as Landsat and Sentinel data, trial satellite data from Planet.com, AIS ship positioning data and ADS-B aircraft positioning data. It offers services such as various cloud servers, geospatial analytics services and Jupyter Notebook. The Data Science Campus of the Office for the National Statistics, made use of the Global Platform in studies such as the urban vegetation index in 112 cities in the United Kingdom (using 17 million images from Google Street View) or estimating the proportion of the rural population that lives within 2 km of an all-season road (indicator 9.1.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals) in Northern Ireland (using Open Street Map and population data).

9. The subsequent sessions at the Open Day demonstrated the use of new data sources and new technologies for official statistics, some of which have been using the Global Platform for executing the projects. Over time, the Global Working Group wants more projects to actively use the Global Platform and store the tested methods and data for shared use by others. The statistical office of Colombia estimated, in a pilot project, the yield of cereal crops by applying a deterministic model that incorporates the results of satellite image processing and other data sources. Among

[2] See https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/bureau/.

[3] Details can be found at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/bigdata/conferences/2018/open-day/default.asp under "Agenda".

other things, the office uses algorithms in Google Earth for pre-processing and processing satellite imagery to obtain the Vegetation Condition Index and the Temperature Condition Index, which are needed to estimate crop yield.

10. Statistics Canada improves its crop yield models using satellite data. It tested (for the month of September) the yield estimates for 19 crops using satellite data. For 15 of those crops, the estimates were evaluated to be of sufficiently high quality to be published as official statistics. This implies that crop yield surveys could be gradually replaced by yield estimates based on satellite data. Overall, Statistics Canada concluded that there was a need to accelerate learning, provide an environment in which people could experiment and assess quality. The benefits of the Global Platform might be in facilitating collaboration using trusted methods, data and partnerships.

11. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) demonstrated the Global Surface Water Explorer application, which provides free and open access to national, basin and subbasin aggregated data on water extent and which supports the measurement of indicator 6.6.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals. This can encourage more engagement in places where other sources of data do not exist. Moreover, the global application ensures comparability across time and places and provides a window back in time. This application leverages the best expertise in Earth observation algorithms from around the world.

12. Positium supports the statistical office of Indonesia with improving the quality of its tourism statistics. Using mobile positioning data, gaps were filled for cross-border statistics of tourists coming from neighbouring countries. In addition, the number and destination of trips regarding domestic tourism could be estimated more accurately using mobile positioning data, while increasing frequency and reducing cost.

13. Eurostat is in the process of developing a unified methodological view for the processing of mobile phone data for official statistics. The so-called reference methodological framework will facilitate the interworking of mobile network operators with statisticians at the technical and organizational levels and ensure the consistency, reproducibility and portability of processing methods. Such cooperation will also provide a concrete basis to clarify legal aspects, such as the General Data Protection Regulation, and enable multi-mobile network operator processing and analysis (i.e., fusion of data from different operators).

14. Eurostat proposes to work in three layers: a mobile network operator data layer in which the processing of raw data takes place; a statistics layer in which the statistical methods are applied and processed; and an in-between convergence layer in which the confidential mobile phone data meet the statistics methods. In the convergence layer, statisticians can design algorithms and the mobile network operator can execute those algorithms using secure multi-party computations.

15. International migration is at the forefront of the political debate, which results in an unprecedented demand for migration statistics. The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat supports countries in improving capacity in the collection and dissemination of migrant stock and flow statistics and works with a number of project countries, including Georgia, where a State commission on migration issues was established specifically to build a comprehensive national migration data infrastructure, using censuses, surveys and administrative data initially. This work supports all Sustainable Development Goal indicators with respect to breakdowns by migratory status.

16. In addition to those more traditional data, the project has begun to look into using new data sources and technologies and has partnered with the national mobile

network regulator in Georgia, which has access to and processes mobile phone data. Together with international partners, such as Eurostat, the International Telecommunication Union, the International Organization for Migration and Positium, the Division attempts to improve the measurement of human mobility using mobile positioning data and social media data, identifying migration, tourism and commuter statistics.

17. To date, the modernization of the measurement of price indices has focused on the use of scanner data from retailers aiming to increase the effective use of such data in official statistics. The Global Working Group task team in this area wants to deliver a tool hosted on the Global Platform for analysis, monitoring and index estimation using historic scanner data from the information, data and measurement company Nielsen, with accompanying training and instructional material on the use of the tool, methodological guidance material and a catalogue of good practice. Among other things, scanner data provides an opportunity to change the expenditure weights over time. On the Global Platform, national statistical offices now have access to tested index method code and can practise calculating the indices using different methodologies on some training data.

18. Nielsen partners with the Global Working Group. For Nielsen, data are its business, and it collects, enriches and delivers data about what people watch, listen to and buy. Nielsen has also begun to collect e-commerce data globally, with a 76 per cent coverage worldwide by 2018. Nielsen and the Global Working Group have been seeking common ground over the past year and are developing win-win scenarios in their cooperation.

19. Since the beginning of 2018, the Global Working Group has a privacy-preserving techniques task team led by the Office for the National Statistics, which is expected to draft the encryption section of the data policy framework for governance and information management. This task team will develop and propose principles, policies and open standards for encryption within the Global Platform. This will cover the ethical use of data, taking full account of data privacy, confidentiality and security issues when designing methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of data. Among other things, this should reduce the risks associated with handling proprietary and sensitive information.

20. Cybernetica is an active member of the Global Working Group task team on privacy-preserving techniques and demonstrated them for the use of scanner and mobile phone data. Cryptography is used to make the reidentification of data subjects unfeasible and reduce the risk of insider attacks without reducing the accuracy of results. Examples are secure multi-party computation and homomorphic encryption, which Cybernetica successfully applied in cases for the Government of Estonia. Anonymization is another technique that adds noise and makes the reidentification of data subjects harder, but also reduces the accuracy of results. Examples are differential privacy and k-anonymization.

III. United Nations Global Platform and the Global Working Group task teams

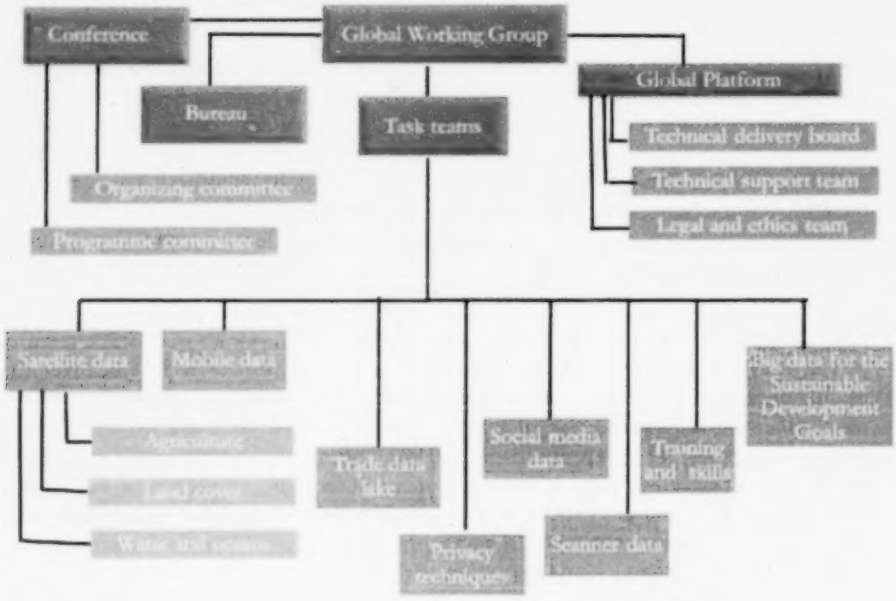
21. In the four years since its creation, the Global Working Group has organized its activities through several task teams, a committee for the Global Platform, committees for the organization of the international conferences and associated work streams and projects. The Bureau of the Global Working Group meets every two weeks to manage and guide the work of the task teams and committees. Each task team and committee has a leading institute, which itself arranges regular meetings

and steers the programme of work. An overview of this elaborate organizational structure is given in the figure below.

A. United Nations Global Platform

22. The Bogotá Declaration (see E/CN.3/2018/8) outlined the details and drivers of the Global Platform as the facilitator for sharing, exchanging and developing trusted data and metadata, trusted methods, trusted partners and trusted learning. The Global Platform will be part of an interconnected and federated network of platforms, be based on the best practices of private and public big data initiatives and offer technology infrastructure for data innovation throughout the community of official statistics. The Global Platform is expected to support capacity-building through a library of trusted training materials, methods and software applications and by conducting workshops on the modernization of official statistics, the use of alternative data sources (e.g., big data) and the application of new tools, services and analytical techniques. The development and maintenance of the Global Platform will be undertaken under the auspices and guidance of the Statistical Commission, in support of the national statistical systems of developed and developing countries.

Figure
Organizational structure of the Global Working Group



23. The Global Platform currently contains several alpha services such as access to Alibaba Cloud, Amazon Web Services, Google Cloud Platform and Microsoft's Azure cloud, combined with a number of other services for code collaboration, methods publishing and Earth observation and location data analysis. Users of the Global Platform can search, build, deploy and consume algorithms and statistical methods and can further develop methods using the main programming languages used by the community (R, Python, Java and Scala). The Global Platform can also host machine-learning models and publish API endpoints to these. Partners on the Global Platform

from around the world can make use of the algorithms from their own environments by calling the APIs. They will also have access to several global data sets, such as the ADS-B flight data dating back to July 2016, AIS shipping data and high-resolution commercial satellite imagery.

B. Global Working Group task teams

24. After delivering its handbook a year ago, the task team on satellite imagery and geospatial data[4] successfully conducted a full five-day training workshop on the use of Earth observation data for statistical purposes and methodologies for estimating crop yield and related statistics using satellite imagery data. Because of the addition of other topics beyond agriculture crop statistics, the task team created three work streams, namely, the estimation of agricultural crop production, land cover and land use statistics and water-related ecosystem statistics.

25. Within the workstream on agriculture statistics, Statistics Canada uploaded to the Global Platform, for the purpose of sharing and testing, its satellite data, crop survey data, agro-climatic data, part of the crop yield source code of Canada and supporting documentation. This collaborative approach of sharing and testing leads to establishing trusted data, methods and learning. This work stream will help to inform indicator 2.4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on the proportion of agricultural land area under productive and sustainable agriculture. A few targeted projects using satellite data to identify specific crops and determine their yield in Canada, Kenya and Rwanda are also foreseen.

26. The work stream on land cover and land use statistics has specific interest in indicator 11.3.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on the ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate, and 15.1.1, on forest area as a proportion of total land area. These indicators include measurements of land cover and land use change and condition over time. The methods used in the measurement are validated through the Committee of Experts on Economic Environmental Accounting. This work stream is looking into executing a project on changes in peatland over time.

27. A third work stream in the task team on satellite imagery and geospatial data focuses on changes in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time (indicator 6.6.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals). As mentioned, a global application is available for the use of satellite data in the estimation of fresh water extent. At the national level, the global application can be adapted slightly for local circumstances, such as was done in Canada owing to frozen water surfaces for large parts of the country in the winter months. This work stream is considering a project on specific water basins in one or more developing countries.

28. With regard to the other Global Working Group task teams, the task team on the use of mobile phone data has finalized the first full draft of its handbook, which details data sources, methods, partnerships models and applications primarily for estimating tourism statistics. The team will soon begin work on a second volume of the handbook, which will include additional applications for the measurement of human mobility and cover privacy by design, such as the framework of Eurostat, described earlier. High priority is given by the team to the execution of a project on measuring migration, tourism and related statistics in Georgia. There are plans to test the methods and algorithms developed during this project in Colombia, Indonesia and Italy.

29. The task team on scanner data in the calculation of consumer price indices is testing statistical methods and software code, using mostly open source applications

[4] See https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/taskteams/satellite/.

and has documented this in a handbook. This will allow other statistical offices to experiment and test scanner data for potential use in their statistical production process, along with web-scraped and survey data. Another promising development is the collaboration with Nielsen, which has made some of its data available to the global statistical community. Nielsen data constitute a global, standardized and therefore comparable data source, which would allow the sharing of trusted methods for the consumer price index calculation.

30. Lastly, as presented during the Global Working Group Open Day, a new task team was created on privacy preserving techniques, which develops methods and procedures for securely processing and exchanging proprietary and sensitive information on the Global Working Group platform among the trusted partners. The team will develop and propose principles and policies for encryption, using open standards and open source algorithms. A handbook is being prepared and expected to become available during 2019.

IV. Next steps

31. The Global Working Group needs to further develop a sustainable business model for the Global Platform as a collaborative research and development environment for the global statistical community. Projects and trusted learning are proofs of concept for the relevance and sustainability of the Global Platform. The Global Working Group will organize and participate in a series of events in 2019 to demonstrate the progress and readiness of the Global Platform.

A. Business model for the United Nations Global Platform

32. The main aspects of the business model for the Global Platform are given below. A background document to this report will provide further details.

Legal entity

33. A legal entity is needed as a vehicle for the overall operation of the Global Platform. The structure and ownership of this entity needs to be worked out. It is expected that the entity will raise and control funding and will be able to underwrite the risks associated with operating the Global Platform. A model, such as that of the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, might provide a good solution.

Operational entity

34. It is envisioned that the trusted partners of the Global Platform will be both providers and users of products and services. Different parts of the same participating institutes may be both providers and users, in which institutes of official statistics and their partners have a special position. The rules of engagement for different types of partners need to be established. The Global Platform will initially focus on open data sources allowing differential access to more sensitive data over time. The Global Platform is intended to have global 24/7 support. The model may extend to regional hubs for co-development and capacity-building activity.

Funding

35. With substantial funding, the Global Platform could grow very quickly, in which funding is expected to come from development and philanthropic sources. Typical investors may include development funding sources, foundations or philanthropic funding from large technology providers.

B. Proof of concept: projects

36. Almost every task team has begun work on one or more projects that are to be executed on the Global Platform as proof of concept. The following projects, which are in various stages of development, can be pointed out:

(a) Estimation of crop yield using satellite data. A good example of this project is the work done by Statistics Canada, mentioned above, in which it successfully used satellite data for the estimation of the yield of 15 crops. Similar projects are scheduled for African countries;

(b) Measuring changes in land cover and land use. A project is planned that focuses on measuring peatlands;

(c) Measuring the extent of water-related ecosystems. A project is under way for the estimation of fresh water extent in Canada, with possible additional applications in specific delta areas (e.g., the Mekong Delta);

(d) Measuring human mobility. A project has commenced in Georgia to measure migration, tourism, seasonal workers and day-time/night-time population using mobile phone data;

(e) Estimating the consumer price index using Nielsen data. Initial testing of Nielsen data for price index calculations in Canada has been done. Further testing with a larger basket of products and more countries is scheduled for 2019;

(f) Exploratory data analysis using trade and transport data. A data lake with trade statistics, AIS shipping data and ADS-B flight data has been set up on the Global Platform, and testing will take place in 2019.

C. Proof of concept: trusted learning

37. Four two-day training workshops were organized in Bogotá in November 2017, which demonstrated that the Global Working Group was able to offer a course curriculum on the use of new data sources for the compilation of official statistics. A five-day regional training workshop on the use of satellite imagery data for crop and related statistics was organized in Bangkok in June 2018 for the Asia and the Pacific region. A similar offering of training workshops is scheduled for 2019, with shorter training workshops just before the fifth International Conference on Big Data and a five-day regional training workshop on the use of mobile phone data for official statistics, to be held in Jakarta in the first half of June 2019.

38. The task team on training, skills and capacity development has begun a new phase with new deliverables, focusing more on skills development in a changing data environment. Statistics Poland has taken the lead on this. In Europe, it is a long-term goal to have a large pool of statistics graduates with data science skills available throughout the European Statistical System. By 2020, data science skills should be an integral part of official statistics education. The programme on skills development of the Global Working Group will link closely with existing programmes around the world, notably the European Statistical Training Programme, which has been offering courses on the use of big data sources, such as text analytics regarding social media and web searches or use of mobile phone data for official statistics.

D. Events

39. In 2019, the Global Working Group will have several opportunities to showcase the progress of the Global Platform. The Global Working Group will organize the following events:

(a) Side event at the fiftieth session of the Statistical Commission, to be held in New York in March 2019. As mentioned, the Global Working Group will submit a background document to this report laying out the options for the sustainable business model for the Global Platform. During the side event, these options will be explained and open for discussion among the wider statistical community;

(b) The fifth International Conference on Big Data. After Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East, Europe and South America, Africa will host this global conference on big data, giving the countries of this continent the opportunity to demonstrate the use of new data sources and technologies in their compilation of official statistics. As indicated, on the margins of the International Conference, training workshops will be organized on a variety of big data-related topics;

(c) Satellite event on big data and new technologies, to be held in Kuala Lumpur from 15 to 17 August 2019 at the sixty-second World Statistics Congress of the International Statistical Institute. In cooperation with the organizing committee of the Congress, the Global Working Group plans to offer hands-on exercises on the use of satellite data, mobile positioning (training) data, social media (training) data and scanner (training) data on the Global Platform. Statisticians and data scientists of statistical offices will be the target audience.

V. Action required by the Statistical Commission

40. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of this report.

Annex

Membership of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics

Countries

Australia

Bangladesh

Brazil

Cameroon

Canada

China

Colombia

Denmark

Egypt

Georgia

Germany

Indonesia

Ireland

Italy

Mexico

Morocco

Netherlands

Oman

Pakistan

Philippines

Poland

Republic of Korea

Saudi Arabia

Switzerland

United Arab Emirates

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

United Republic of Tanzania

United States of America

Organizations

African Development Bank

Caribbean Community

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Economic Commission for Africa

Economic Commission for Europe

Eurostat

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

International Monetary Fund

International Telecommunication Union

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf

Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific

Statistics Division

United Nations Global Pulse

Universal Postal Union

World Bank

United Nations E/CN.3/2019/28

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 December 2018

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Fiftieth session
5–8 March 2019
Item 4 (f) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: statistical capacity development

Statistical capacity development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which was prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, provides an overview of the recent activities undertaken by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat in support of the efforts of countries to strengthen their national statistical capacity so as to better respond to the data challenges resulting from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report also provides information on collaborative efforts for synchronizing initiatives and leveraging partnerships and coordination in the area of statistical capacity development, as well as emerging strategic frameworks. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2019/1

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I. Introduction

1. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [1] brought increased attention to the need to strengthen the statistical capacity of developing countries to measure, monitor and report on the Sustainable Development Goals, including the associated targets and indicators. The 2030 Agenda explicitly requests that Member States enhance, by 2020, their capacity development support to developing countries with the purpose of increasing significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

2. The global indicator framework for the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets presents a tremendous challenge to producers of official statistics. Countries must fulfil the new data demands arising from the 2030 Agenda, including defining national targets and indicators, in order to implement it. Countries need to develop and adapt their national statistical systems to respond to those demands and put in place streamlined processes to ensure the timely production of official statistics.

3. The Cape Town Global Action Plan (CTGAP) for Sustainable Development Data, launched during the first United Nations World Data Forum in January 2017, identified the gaps in national statistics programmes and statistical coordination in response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Action Plan thus serves as a road map for the capacity development efforts of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and other international, regional and national agencies involved in the production of official statistics.

4. The present report provides an overview of the capacity development activities undertaken by the Statistics Division as part of its Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation as well as recent and ongoing Development Account and donor-funded projects. Additional details on the Division's capacity development initiatives in specific substantive areas such as national accounts, demographic and social statistics or environmental economic accounting are provided in domain-specific reports submitted to the Statistical Commission.

II. Implementation of the capacity development programme in the period 2017–2018

5. In the period 2017–2018, the Statistics Division organized 97 workshops and seminars and 24 expert group meetings, at which 3,250 professionals shared experiences and received training (see table 1). During that period, the Statistics Division engaged for the first time in a series of e-learning courses on topics from different statistical domains. In total, 35 e-learning courses were conducted and 2,470 participants were trained.

6. In addition, 185 individual fellowships were awarded to national statisticians and geospatial information experts from developing countries to enable them to attend 29 regional and international meetings.

[1] General Assembly resolution 70/1.

Table 1
Number of events and participants, 2017 and 2018

	Workshops and seminars		*Expert group meetings*		*Study visits*		*e-learning courses*	
Year	*Number of events*	*Participants*	*Number of events*	*Participants*	*Number of events*	*Participants*	*Number of events*	*Participants*
2017	57	1 285	13	732	16	94	11	1 299
2018	40	827	11	406	13	91	24	1 171
Total	**97**	**2 112**	**24**	**1 138**	**29**	**185**	**35**	**2 470**

7. In table 2, the themes of the events held are broken down into five broad categories, namely (a) demographic and social statistics; (b) economic statistics, such as international trade, economic globalization, tourism, energy and industrial statistics, as well as national accounts; (c) environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting; (d) events related to Sustainable Development Goal indicators; and (e) geospatial information management.[2]

Table 2
Number of workshops, expert group meetings and seminars, by theme

Year	*Demographic and social statistics*	*Economic statistics (trade, globalization, tourism, energy, industry, national accounts)*	*Environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting*	*Sustainable Development Goal indicators and general statistics*	*Geospatial information management*
2017	18	15	19	12	6
2018	12	10	13	12	4
Total	**30**	**25**	**32**	**24**	**10**

A. Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation

8. The Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation (RPTC),[3] supports developing countries in their capacity development efforts, especially those geared towards achieving strategic area 3 of the Cape Town Global Action Plan: strengthening of basic statistical activities and programmes. The capacity development activities of the Statistics Division under the Regular Programme draw substantively from the normative work of the Statistical Commission and respond to the policy guidance and programmes of action agreed at the sessions of the Commission.

9. In the period 2017–2018, following the outcomes of the dialogue on development indicators and the adoption by the Statistical Commission of the Cape Town Global Action Plan and relevant international statistical standards, the Statistics Division's capacity development efforts focused on two key areas: (a) strengthening the national statistical capacities to measure, monitor, assess and report on progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through the use of indicators; and (b) enhancing the modernization of national statistical systems, taking into account the recommendations of the Commission on the data revolution and the use of new technologies and big data for official statistics, including geospatial information and its integration with statistical data. Efforts related to those two areas involved activities supporting the implementation of the 2020 World Population and Housing

[2] The groupings do not include the e-learning courses conducted by the Statistics Division.
[3] Established by the General Assembly in its resolution 58 (I) of 14 December 1946.

Census Programme, civil registration and vital statistics systems, the System of National Accounts, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES), among others. By organizing capacity development activities relating to the use of big data and new technologies for official statistics and in the area of geospatial information management, the Division aimed at further advancing the development and use of geospatial data and tools to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related global agendas.

10. The most common capacity development activities funded by the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation have been (a) the organization of regional and subregional training workshops and seminars by the Statistics Division alone or in partnership with the regional commissions and other international and regional partner organizations and specialized agencies; (b) the provision of advisory services by the Division's four interregional advisers (in the areas of census-taking, geospatial information management, statistical training and capacity development and the organization of the national statistical systems) and by short-term experts, both staff members and consultants, as resource persons and trainers; and (c) the provision of fellowships, short-term training sessions, study tours and on-the-job training for national statisticians and national geospatial information experts from developing countries to enable them to upgrade and strengthen their knowledge and skills in the areas of statistics and geographical information management and to establish regional and international networks.

11. The Statistics Division organized more than 80 workshops and seminars in the period, and its staff members also contributed to the successful conduct of many other capacity development events, organized and funded by the regional commissions and other entities, by acting as resource persons in their specific domains of expertise. The descriptions below refer to events organized by the Division.

12. With regard to civil registration and vital statistics systems, developing countries continued to receive support and training on the implementation of the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3*,[4] adopted by the Statistical Commission in 2014, especially through a newly released handbook. Workshops aimed at promoting the revised set of contemporary standards for civil registration and vital statistics, as well as developing and maintaining a holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics and identity management, were organized in Colombia (October 2017), Viet Nam (November 2017) and Morocco and Tunisia (March 2018) in close cooperation with and support from the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic Commission for Africa and the non-governmental organization Vital Strategies. The workshops, which brought together a civil registrar, an official statistician and a public health professional from each country, covered 40 countries in Asia and Latin America, thereby ensuring that more than 120 participants had the opportunity to grasp the intricacies of the revised methodological framework for civil registration and vital statistics and interoperability with identity management.

13. For the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme, significant efforts were taken to prepare for its implementation through the preparation and launch of a revised set of international standards and the Handbook on the Management of Population and Housing Censuses (revision 2). A series of workshops aimed at training census managers and census methodologists were held during the reporting period in Zambia (March 2017), Nigeria (May 2017), the United Republic of Tanzania (June 2017), Georgia (April 2018), Sri Lanka (May 2018) and Malaysia

[4] Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 19/Rev.3 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.XVII.10).

(June 2018). The workshops, conducted with full support and cooperation from the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Population Fund and the Economic Commission for Africa, covered more than 50 countries and trained 140 population and housing census professionals.

14. With regard to the System of National Accounts (SNA), developing countries in almost every region received support and training on the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, which had been mandated by the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session following the adoption of the 2008 SNA. Workshops and seminars on various aspects of the 2008 SNA and its supporting statistics were organized in Lebanon (October 2017), Brazil (September 2018), China (September and November 2018) and Turkey (October 2018). The workshops and seminars were attended by relevant officials from the national statistical agencies, central banks and other government agencies. In addition, work began in 2018 with the Economic Commission for Africa with regard to the development and delivery of National Accounts e-learning modules in Africa.

15. As part of the implementation programme for the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), a regional workshop focusing on energy and air emission accounting and its contribution to policy design and decision-making was held in Antigua (May 2017) in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. A blended learning initiative was also organized on the SEEA Central Framework in Belarus (January 2018) in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Europe. The blended learning consisted of two phases: first, a mandatory online training course, and second, an in-person workshop. The in-person workshop provided an opportunity for the participants to explore topics in more depth, complete hands-on exercises and formulate draft action plans for SEEA implementation.

16. For the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics, regional workshops on the Framework were organized in Gabon (November 2017) and Lebanon (November 2018) that aimed at imparting to statisticians from national statistical offices and experts from selected ministries of the environment or equivalent institutions detailed knowledge and understanding of contemporary approaches to environment statistics, allowing them to identify gaps and deficiencies in environmental data in order to improve the production of regular, accurate and reliable environment statistics. Climate change statistics and indicators were also discussed, in accordance with the Statistical Commission's mandate that a global set of climate change statistics and indicators be developed. In addition, data collection of environment statistics and environment-related indicators were also addressed.

17. With regard to energy statistics, as part of the ongoing implementation of the International Recommendations for Energy Statistics (IRES), a workshop was organized in Malaysia (November 2017) with the Energy Commission of Malaysia. The workshop was attended by more than 50 participants from eight countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region. In addition, a workshop on energy and environment indicators was organized in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean in Guatemala (January 2018) to train participants in a specific methodology for the compilation of Sustainable Development Goal indicators in those domains. More than 50 participants were trained in that workshop.

18. For international merchandise trade statistics, trade in services statistics and tourism statistics, the Statistics Division organized workshops in Maldives (April 2017), the Philippines (June 2017), China (September 2017) and Trinidad and Tobago (May 2018) with funding from its statistical revenue account. Using that account, the Division assists developing countries in improving the quality, availability and

dissemination of their official trade statistics for inclusion in the Division's databases, such as the UN Comtrade database, by regularly organizing regional training workshops and awarding fellowships.

19. Traditionally, fellowships under the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation have been provided to national statisticians and national geospatial information experts from developing countries to enable them to attend regional and international meetings organized by partner organizations. In the period 2017–2018, fellowships were provided to enable participation in meetings of the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics, the Expert Group on Business Registers, the London Group on Environmental Accounting, the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, the International Cartographic Conference, the World Statistics Congress, the International Open Data Conference and others.

B. Development Account projects

20. Resources under the Regular Programme can meet only a limited proportion of the demand of countries for technical assistance. The activities often entail the provision of initial assistance, which is subsequently augmented through projects financed from external budgetary resources, trust funds or the Development Account. The Development Account is a capacity development programme of the Secretariat aimed at enhancing the capacities of developing countries in the priority areas of the United Nations development agenda.

21. In the period 2017–2018, the Statistics Division marked the successful completion of two Development Account projects (on the Sustainable Development Goals and on environment statistics and integrated environmental-economic accounting), the continuation of one Development Account project (on statistics and data) and the launch of two new projects on migration and geospatial information management.

22. The three-year project on "Enhancing national statistical capacity to measure, monitor and report on progress on achieving post-2015 goals and targets for sustainable development" was concluded in June 2018. The project was implemented in six countries (three in Asia (Cambodia, the Philippines and Viet Nam) and three in Africa (Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda)) in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Economic Commission for Africa, and with other partners such as the African Development Bank and PARIS21.

23. As part of the project, a detailed statistical capacity gap assessment was conducted in all six countries. The assessments involved consultations with data providers and statistics producers throughout each national statistical system. The assessments provided an evaluation of their current and potential statistical capacity to compile the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators and identified their dependency on external support and need for additional resources and technical assistance on the level of individual Goals and indicators. The results of the project and the tools developed during the project were shared with other countries in two regional workshops in the Philippines (November 2017) and Ethiopia (May 2018).

24. The three-year project on "Supporting Member States in developing and strengthening environment statistics and integrated environmental-economic accounting for improved monitoring of sustainable development" was concluded in 2017 with several outputs, including national and regional environment statistics publications and a compilation of pilot environmental accounts, as well as national action plans in environment statistics and in environmental-economic accounting. The project aimed at addressing the technical and institutional barriers to the establishment of routinely produced environment statistics and environmental-

economic accounts at the national level. The structure of the project contained two modules. Module A, which included five participating countries from the East African Community subregion (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania), aimed at strengthening national capacities to produce environment statistics and will be based on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and its tools. Module B aimed at the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting in four countries in two subregions: Kenya and Uganda in Africa, and Malaysia and Indonesia in Asia. Project implementation intensified during 2017 with the conduct of national and regional workshops in the project countries, as well as the provision of remote technical assistance.

25. A $10 million Development Account project, the "Programme for Statistics and Data", which seeks to strengthen national statistical systems for the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals, including by addressing specific data gaps, is currently under implementation. The project is being implemented by the Statistics Division in cooperation with all regional commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

26. The Programme for Statistics and Data is structured according to four pillars: means of implementation, environment statistics and indicators, social and demographic statistics and indicators, and economic statistics and indicators. The implementation started gradually during the fourth quarter of 2016. Most activities for the four pillars have kicked off with regional and subregional activities and then progressively focused on country missions, national training workshops, the development of specific guidelines, the collection of good practices and the development of online training courses. For example, four training workshops on the use of new data sources (satellite data, mobile phone data, scanner data and social media data, respectively) for official statistics were organized by the Statistics Division in November 2017 under the Development Account. The training was conducted by the members of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics.

27. Initially, the Programme was foreseen to gradually wrap up and conclude with a series of subregional and regional workshops by the end of 2019. The midterm evaluation, conducted by an external evaluator and concluded in November 2018, highlighted that the project is progressing well and that its implementation is broadly on track despite the delay in the inception of the Programme. On the basis of the outcomes and recommendations provided in the midterm evaluation report, it has been decided to extend the Programme by a year (to the end of 2020) with additional funding of $1.5 million.

28. A new project to strengthen the "Collection and use of international migration data in the context of the 2030 Agenda" was launched to run during the period from 2018 to 2021. The project is led by the Statistics Division, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Division, the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration. Major outputs of the project include: (a) a set of guidelines for producing migration-relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicators; and (b) capacity development activities for countries in Asia and Latin America to promote the adoption of international standards for migration statistics and the production of data in line with migration-relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicators. In 2018, needs assessment missions were carried out in two project countries (Georgia and Jordan). The third needs assessment mission will be carried

out in the Philippines in January 2019, followed by a regional workshop for Asian countries in February 2019.

29. A second project launched in 2018 addresses "Strengthening geospatial information management in developing countries towards implementing the 2030 Agenda" and is projected to run during the period from 2018 to 2021. The project will focus on improving and strengthening the national geospatial information management capacities of developing countries in two beneficiary regions, namely, Africa and Asia and the Pacific. The project contributes towards improving the timeliness, availability and accessibility of geospatial information at all levels by national geospatial information authorities, thus improving and strengthening national geospatial information management and systems.

C. Donor-funded projects

30. In the period 2017–2018, the Statistics Division continued the implementation of donor-funded projects on evidence and data for gender equality, disability statistics, environmental-economic accounting, monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals and geospatial information management.

31. The Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) initiative continued to be implemented by the Statistics Division and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). A key deliverable, the United Nations Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Asset Ownership from a Gender Perspective, was finalized and published. Five regional workshops were organized, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in Italy (November 2017), the Philippines (December 2017), Georgia (June 2018), Ethiopia (July 2018) and Chile (August 2018), to present the key recommendations proposed in the Guidelines. The workshops benefited from the participation of a number of experts and representatives from national statistical offices. Furthermore, under the EDGE initiative, a technical report on measuring entrepreneurship from a gender perspective was finalized and an e-learning course was developed to ensure the wide dissemination and use of the EDGE methodology.

32. The project on "Strengthening disability statistics in the era of the post-2015 development agenda", funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, continued to be implemented through the organization of three regional meetings in Oman (March 2017), Kazakhstan (June 2017) and Santiago (June 2017) on disability statistics in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That brought the total number of regional meetings that have been organized since 2016 to six. The main objectives of the regional meetings, which were organized in collaboration with the regional commissions of the United Nations, were to enhance the sharing of national experiences and practices in the measurement of disability and foster discussions among national statisticians and policy experts on national data needs for monitoring inclusive development. The Statistics Division is also coordinating the revision of the Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics, and organized a meeting of experts in 2017 to initiate the process.

33. The project on "Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services" was launched in 2017 by the Statistics Division together with UNEP, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the European Union. The project, which is funded by the European Union, aims to assist the five participating partner countries, namely Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, to advance the knowledge agenda on environmental and ecosystem accounting. It will initiate pilot testing of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting Experimental

Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA) with a view to improving the management of natural biotic resources, ecosystems and their services at the national level and mainstreaming issues of biodiversity and ecosystems into policy planning and implementation.

34. The project will review policy demands, data availability and measurement practices in order to advance and mainstream natural capital accounting and will initiate pilot ecosystem accounts in each of the five strategic partner countries. The following work streams will be carried out during the implementation of the project from 2017–2020: (a) the development of a national plan and selection of ecosystem accounts, in physical and monetary terms, based on national priorities, in each of the partner countries; (b) the development of guidelines and methodologies that contribute to the national implementation of the project and the global research agenda in the context of SEEA EEA; (c) the development of a set of indicators in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Aichi Targets and other international initiatives; (d) contributions to the alignment between SEEA and corporate sustainability reporting; (e) increasing awareness of natural capital accounting; (f) enhancing capacity-building and knowledge-sharing as a way to enlarge the community of practitioners on natural capital accounting; and (g) scenario analysis on how different policy choices impact ecosystem services.

35. The project on "Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals" was launched in 2017 by the Statistics Division with support from the Department for International Development (DfID) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to make the Sustainable Development Goal indicators available to the broadest possible audience and to strengthen the capacity of countries in the compilation and use of the indicators. It covers 20 countries across Africa and Asia, 9 of which participated in the previous project on "Improving the collation, availability and dissemination of national development indicators, including [Millennium Development Goal] indicators", which ran from 2009 to 2015.

36. The main project activities are to support the pilot countries in the development of national strategies for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals and the creation or upgrading of national data and metadata platforms of Goal indicators, and to engage users of the Sustainable Development Goal data. Deliverables on a global level are a Sustainable Development Goal data and visualization platform that provides comparisons between global and national datasets and the establishment of an automated data exchange based on the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) standard. In 2017, two meetings to kick off the project were organized for the Africa and Asia regions in Ethiopia (May 2017) and Thailand (June 2017), respectively. Following those meetings, individual country missions have been conducted to assist national statistical offices in the preparation of Sustainable Development Goal monitoring implementation plans and produce metadata for the national Goal indicators, and to set up pilot data exchange using new data structure standards agreed by a SDMX-Sustainable Development Goal working group under the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. In addition, the project is providing assistance to countries with regard to integrating open data and data interoperability principles in the development of the national Sustainable Development Goal platforms.

37. The statistical capacity-building and geospatial information management project funded by the Government of China was extended for a further five years to cover the period from 2018 to 2022. The project will continue to provide support and capacity development to developing countries' national geospatial and statistical systems. In 2018, capacity development workshops were conducted in Tonga (April 2018), Ethiopia (April 2018) and Kenya (planned for December 2018) on a number of different geospatial areas including data licensing, legal and policy frameworks,

fundamental data themes and measuring the Sustainable Development Goals. An expert group meeting was conducted to better understand the issues and challenges related to disaggregation by geographic location and the availability of satellite Earth observations data streams for the National Statistical System in the production of indicators to measure the Sustainable Development Goals.

38. The Statistics Division continues the implementation of the statistical capacity-building for China and other developing countries project funded by the Government of China. During the period 2017–2018, the Division, in collaboration with the National Bureau of Statistics of China, organized six international workshops and meetings in a few areas, such as industrial statistics, statistical training, SEEA, Sustainable Development Goal indicators, supply and use tables and digital economy, resulting in the training of over 600 statisticians worldwide. In response to the need for the strategic professional development of national statisticians, the project carried out technical advisory missions, sponsored the short-term work of national statisticians in international organizations and awarded fellowships to attend international seminars and conferences. The project has greatly supported the efforts of countries, primarily in the Asia-Pacific region, to strengthen their national statistical capacity so as to better respond to the data challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

39. A new fund was made available to the Statistics Division by the Government of Japan to support building the statistical capacity of developing countries to measure, monitor and report on the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2018, that fund supported the organization of two workshops, one on quality in statistics for the Goals (April 2018), and another on gender statistics as part of the Seventh Global Forum on Gender Statistics (November 2018), both of which were held in Japan. A number of fellowships were also financed through the fund for national statisticians from developing countries to attend certain high-level events throughout the year.

40. Within the context of those donor-funded projects, the Statistics Division expresses its gratitude to the Governments of Australia, China, Japan and the United Kingdom, and to its partner organizations, the European Commission, Eurostat, the World Bank, UNEP, UN-Women and others, for their support of its capacity development programmes, and is looking forward to strong support and collaboration in the years to come.

III. Other coordination efforts for capacity development

A. Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data

41. The Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data was informally launched at the first United Nations World Data Forum, held in Cape Town on 15 January 2017, and then adopted by the Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session in March 2017. The Action Plan provides the framework for the discussion, planning, implementation and evaluation of statistical capacity development pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Action Plan was developed by the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB).

42. The implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan will address gaps in national statistics and statistical coordination identified in response to the 2030 Agenda. Such gaps must be addressed to better enable the use of country-generated statistics in the calculation of global Sustainable Development Goal indicators. However, the guidance provided by the Action Plan is not restricted to capacity

development for Sustainable Development Goal indicators alone. Rather, the goal is to strengthen the national statistical systems so that they can be most responsive to statistical needs to achieve the 2030 Agenda and beyond. As such, the Action Plan serves as guidance for the development of a capacity development strategy and the planning of future capacity development activities at the Statistics Division.

B. Dubai declaration

43. At the second United Nations World Data Forum, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 24 October 2018, a declaration was agreed to further support the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan. The declaration called for the establishment of an innovative funding mechanism, open to all stakeholders under United Nations membership oversight, that is able to respond in a fast and efficient manner to the priorities of national data and statistical systems, with a goal to mobilize both domestic and international funds and activate partnerships and funding opportunities to strengthen the capacity of national data and statistical systems. The funding mechanism, entirely demand driven, is to be created under the mandate of the Statistical Commission and operate under the guidance of representatives of national statistical systems and different data and donor communities who will support the decision-making on operational modalities and on raising resources to address the data needs for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

C. Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training

44. The Cape Town Global Action Plan identifies statistical capacity development as an essential action area for achieving the scope and intent of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There has also been a long-felt need to harmonize the training offerings of various institutions and maximize their outreach to ensure that they are delivered in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

45. As a result, the Statistics Division has held numerous consultations with a wide range of stakeholders on the establishment of a network of international and regional institutions that provide training in official statistics. At a meeting on statistical training held in Beijing (September 2017), representatives of international and regional institutions engaged in statistical training and representatives from national statistical offices from several countries overwhelmingly supported the establishment of a network to be known as the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training (GIST). The Network was formally established in January 2018, and its first meeting took place in the margins of the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission (March 2018), where the founding and advisory group members of GIST discussed the way forward and expanded the Network membership to include additional entities. Currently, the Network consists of 21 members – 16 regional and international training institutes, and 5 countries whose national statistical offices have statistical training centres that provide training beyond their own national borders – and it continues to advance its work in the area of training in official statistics.

D. Restructuring of the Statistics Division

46. In April 2018, the Statistics Division was restructured to better respond to the demands of the data needs for the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition to three substantive divisions, which grouped all social and demographic statistics, all economic statistics and all environment-related statistics

(plus geospatial information), two branches were created with overarching responsibilities: the Development Data and Outreach Branch (DDOB) and the newly formed Data Innovation and Capacity Branch (DICB). Part of the work programme of the Data Innovation and Capacity Branch is to evaluate and coordinate the capacity development activities of the Statistics Division and ensure increased coherence among the statistical capacity development activities of the Statistics Division and other entities. The Data Innovation and Capacity Branch also pursues coordination of modern technologies and methods for the production of statistics and for the delivery of capacity development activities.